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## Two Girls' Lives.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE WIFE'S PLOT.

AN apartment in a residence on Madison avenue; an hour before the early winter sunset; and a regally-beautiful woman, alone amid the elegance and luxury and style of the palatial abode. A woman whose matchless grace well accorded with her beauty of face and form, and whose elegance of toilette suited perfectly the surroundings.

Just now, her fringing lashes, black as midnight skies, swept their curving fringe over her marble-white cheeks; and as she eagerly read and re-read the short, coarsely-penned letter that she held in her jeweled hands, there was just the faintest possible expression of anxiety on the full, red lips that were ever so slightly parted.

"Fifty thousand dollars, my own private fortune, to go to my adopted child, Edna Silvester, provided she is not married before her twentieth birthday. Her death or marriage before that time will revert the legacy to my husband, Grandon Saxton."

That was what Mrs. Grandon Saxton was reading as she sat there among the fast-gathering shadows of that November day; this beautiful woman, Grandon Saxton's second wife, who was reading her predecessor's informal testament.

She folded away the paper, and placed it in her pocket-book, then leaned back in her chair and twisted a diamond ring on her finger, her eyes gazing through the plate-glass windows into the bloom of the conservatory beyond.

"Fifty thousand dollars" to be Edna Silvester's—the girl she hated more than any mortal on earth: the frank, high-bred girl whom her husband's first wife had, in her own childlessness, so cherished; Edna who was forever proving a rival to her own daughter, Lenore.

It was a very annoying thought to Mrs. Saxton that this interloper should be thus favored, and not only in this one instance, but in another that laid especially near her heart.

She was deep in her reverie, when her husband came into the dim room.

"Isidore! I had no idea you were here. Were you enjoying a cozy half-hour by yourself, with your thoughts for good company?"

"I was thinking of our Lenore, and Mr. Audrey, and—Edna."

She looked up at him as she spoke, and she

saw reflected in his eyes some of the anxiety she knew was in her own; and then she arose from her low hassock, and swept over the carpet, her trailing skirts making a shimmer of brightness, and seated herself in a chair whose cushions served as a foil for her beauty, then bade Mr. Saxton draw his chair near her.

"Let us talk it over," she said. "There remains an hour, nearly, before dinner, and we may as well dispose of the question."

"It seems to me there can be very little to settle. The case is simply this," and Mr. Saxton crossed his legs, and leaned back in his chair, with his elbows on the arms of it, and his finger tips lightly touching each other. "First, it is our desire that Lenore, our only child, shall marry Oberdon Audrey, which, on account of the superior attractions of Miss Edna Silvester, seems very improbable."

Mrs. Saxton's reply came eagerly, quickly:

"I am sure Lenore is much prettier than your first wife's protegee, Mr. Saxton. Lenore is a perfect brunette, a most exquisite little Hebe. It is not Edna's beauty that attracted Mr. Audrey."

"Edna is very pretty; though I am free to confess it is less her appearance than a nameless charm that somehow seems always about her. Only yesterday Mr. Audrey remarked to me what a fascinating girl Edna was."



"YOU TELL, IF YOU DARE! YOU'LL RUE THE DAY IF—"



"And Mr. Audrey will never be able to appreciate Lenore so long as Edna is before his eyes, beggar though he thinks she is, and a nameless wail. Did you ever care for her?"

Mr Saxton shrugged his shoulders.

"Not particularly, I am afraid. The truth is, Isidore, there has always been too much candor, frankness, independence about Edna for me. I infinitely prefer Lenore's style."

"And Lenore is our own—and Edna Sylvester shall not thwart her nor me, Mr. Saxton," and her voice took in its cadence a peculiarly low, intense key, that always meant she was very much in earnest, and she rested her eyes freely on his face. "Mr. Saxton, Edna shall not again have the opportunity to outshine our daughter as she has done in times past, 'unconsciously,' I presume she would say, in that haughty way of hers, if I would condescend to take her to task."

"Well, and what are you going to do?"

Mrs. Saxton met his inquiring eyes, smiled, and answered:

"It will be a very simple thing to do, Mr. Saxton, considering whom we have to deal with. It is just this: you will decide to give Miss Edna another year's schooling at Mount Eden, which, though we know it is unnecessary, and which she will doubtless dislike, she will consent to in accordance with her ideas of duty. Once there, Mr. Saxton, my word for it, she will not darken our doors again. How I shall accomplish this I may tell you."

Mrs. Saxton's eyes were sparkling with a brilliancy strangely at variance with her quiet, repressed tones, and her husband knew by the way she twirled her rings, that there was more inside that scheming head of hers than she saw fit to tell him.

He smiled approvingly as she ceased speaking. It was a very sensible matter-of-fact way of removing Edna and her attractions from Lenore's way as well as from Mr. Audrey's attention and admiration, and he signified his entire willingness to assist to bring about the greatly hoped for state of affairs between Lenore and Mr. Audrey.

But—and an unpleasant sensation occurred to him as he deliberated upon it—what did his wife mean by saying "Edna would not darken their doors again?"

Did Mrs. Saxton mean to close them on the girl forever, when she sent her off to Mt. Eden? He hardly felt comfortably about that. He always intended to do well by his dead wife's protegee; he had always done well by her until his own daughter, Lenore, suddenly—it seemed suddenly to him, as he thought of it now—developed into a fashionable young lady.

All their girlhood days Edna and Lenore had been like sisters—so far as their intercourse was considered. They never could have been like sisters on the grounds of similarity of tastes, views, appearances or actions; and the very characteristics that made Edna so different from Lenore were those that made Mr. Saxton not only dislike her, but, what inwardly annoyed him greatly, feel a contempt of himself and a respect for her and her sweet, pure, frank ways.

Yes, Edna should go again to Mt. Eden. He knew his wife spoke rightly when she said there would be no trouble with Edna about it; she was too thoroughly a girl of principle to refuse to obey so suitable a request. And Mr. Saxton determined, as a salve to his conscience, which somehow would misgive him so annoyingly, that Edna should have a complete renewal of her wardrobe, and a princely supply of pin-money.

This he told Mrs. Saxton, who sat watching him while these fleeting thoughts we have penned were chasing through his mind.

"Oh, most certainly. But I would advise you to disabuse your mind of the idea of the sheep going to the slaughter."

She smiled a little oddly, and it made Mr. Saxton feel queerly. How did she know what his thoughts were? Was there any thing wrong in her thoughts against Edna Sylvester?

And, although she shook her head gayly as he offered her his arm to the table, somehow or other there kept constantly recurring to him the feeling he experienced when his wife suggested Edna's leaving home.

He was a little abstracted while he ate his boned turkey and oyster pie; and Mrs. Saxton, from her seat at the foot of the table, noticed very carefully how slowly he sipped his coffee.

He was a little worried; and he went back to his office directly after dinner, hoping that the quiet of his office would shake off the unwonted depression of spirits.

Mrs. Saxton went up to her own room, after

her husband had gone, with a slow, thoughtful tread, that was soft and noiseless as a cat's.

She locked her door after she entered, and then went to the pier glass that was let in the wall between two of the front windows, and stood looking earnestly, critically at the splendid reflection.

"Can you do it, Isidore Saxton? Are you as brave of heart, as strong of soul, as you are fair of face?"

She was asking the question of herself, and for answer a mocking light brightened her eyes, as if defying all weakness.

"I can carry it through. I will carry it through; and if Edna Sylvester doesn't rue the day she was born, then I am no prophetess!"

She began removing the golden pendants from her dainty ears; then, as if the thought had just occurred to her, walked to the speaking tube, and called through it:

"Is Rachelle there? Send her to me."

Then she returned to the dressing-bureau, and continued what she had been doing.

It was not more than five minutes before a low, respectful knock sounded on the door.

"It is you, Rachelle? Come in; I am waiting."

A small, thin woman, with a footfall as soft as snowflakes; with deepest, coal-black eyes, that produced the strangest effect as they glowed and smoldered under eyebrows of densest whiteness. Her hair, fine and soft as corn silk, and white like her brows, was banded plainly and smoothly from her face, and drawn to a French knot at the back.

Her attire was scrupulously neat; a black alpaca, made plainly fashionable; a white linen collar, cuffs and ruffled apron. Her manner was quiet, ladylike, but it somehow suggested a suppressed excitement. She seemed like a woman who had seen terrible scenes, or who kept fearful secrets, or who would be a dangerous enemy.

This was Rachelle; who was Mrs. Saxton's maid, so far as public position in the family went; who was an old friend and confidante actually.

Rachelle knew Isidore Saxton as no human being, not even Mr. Saxton, knew her.

As a girl, Isidore Raleigh's dreams of ambition were confided to Rachelle Hunt. Her later struggles to marry a man who could surround her with the wealth her soul asked for its price of happiness; her quiet, thoughtfully planned, skillfully executed efforts to secure what she desired; these, each in their turn, had been confided to Rachelle, and Rachelle had been ever the discreet, far-seeing friend, whose assistance was invaluable, whose advice was not to be scorned.

And so, when Isidore Raleigh married Mr. Saxton, she kept her promise to her friend, and got her the position of maid; a position Rachelle quietly accepted, with no false pride, or with no foolish envy that Isidore, as poor as herself, had managed to secure all the elegance of the Saxton mansion.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WAYWARD BEAUTY.

A SWEETER-FACED girl than Edna Sylvester was rarely to be found; and yet, with a beauty far below that of Miss Lenore Saxton, as Mrs. Saxton had truly and proudly declared, Edna's attractiveness depended on a certain charm of manner and frank independence of character, that were as native to her as her dainty, high-bred ways that Mrs. Saxton would have given worlds for her daughter Lenore to possess.

Who she was, Edna had wearied herself asking and wondering about. That she was a born lady was evident to others, if not to herself; that she was the object of jealous persecution by Mrs. Saxton, and latterly by Lenore, she knew; that she had been picked up by Mr. Saxton, a miserable wail in the streets of London, and loved and cared for by him and his childless wife, she had both been told and remembered; and now, since Mrs. Saxton, in her pleasant, purring way, had told her it was considered best that she return to Mt. Eden to enter a course of extras, Edna had been thinking, half-sorrowfully, half-gladly, of her past and present life.

Sorrowfully, because she was rather weary of school and study; gladly, because she had not enjoyed her home as much as she expected to, during her vacation.

When Mrs. Saxton had heard her quiet assent, and had gone out of her room with a wild elation at heart to see how easily her pathway opened before her, Edna leaned her head on

her hand, and sat looking out on the leafless trees of the park.

What made Lenore dislike her so? Surely, she never had given her occasion, unless, could it be possible, Lenore was jealous of Mr. Audrey?

A faint smile curled her lips at the utter ridiculousness of the idea. She knew that Mr. Audrey was nothing to her, and never would be, in all probability; certainly never, unless she learned to care for him more and very differently than she did then.

To be sure she thoroughly liked him, and admired him for qualities that should command every true woman's respect; and they were great friends too, sufficiently intimate to call each other "Edna" and "Oberdon," when together alone.

But she was heart free as yet, and that was why she could not make herself believe Lenore was jealous on account of Oberdon Audrey.

Her reverie was beginning to develop into a weariness of soul, when there came a light, springy step along the hall, then a tap at the door, and then an entrance.

"I knew I'd find you here, Edna, so I came up. It's awfully lonesome down-stairs, with mamma busy over her stupid housekeeping accounts, and papa not yet in from his office."

A clear, girlish voice it was, with a shade of impatient recklessness in its tones, that contrasted very forcibly with Edna's, so quiet, frank, ladylike.

Edna offered no especial welcome, nor did she manifest any particular displeasure at the intrusion; and Lenore chatted and laughed and looked out the window with an exuberance of spirit very delightful to experience, judging by her bright, piquant face.

"I presume you will be very gay, this winter, while I am at Mt. Eden," Edna remarked, half-bitterly, half-anxiously.

Lenore did not seem to note the spirit of the remark.

"Gay? Indeed I shall be! Why, there's no end of fun in New York, in winter, and papa says I shall do exactly what I want to."

Edna made no reply, but Lenore's words made her fairly shiver. For her to do as she chose, involved a series of madcap escapades, that not even Mr. or Mrs. Saxton dreamed of; silly adventures, foolish flirtings at the matinee, on the cars, or more culpable misdemeanors when traveling, that Edna had both seen and been told by Lenore, in moments of enthusiastic confidence.

Often Edna had remonstrated with pretty, piquant Lenore, when she would insist on waving her handkerchief at some dashing young man with bold, admiring eyes; and once when Lenore was actually in the act of answering an admiring stranger who plead for the honor of her acquaintance by letter, Edna had, by her unwonted vehemency and resolute will, so frightened Lenore, that she had desisted, and so saved herself—ah! only one knew what.

And now, her one safeguard was to be torn away, and Lenore Saxton, with her witching beauty, her reckless care of consequences, her impulsive eagerness for excitement and romance, was to have her own way!

It was little wonder Edna's heart, burdened though it was with troubles of its own, felt an added pang of sickening pain.

"Lenore, oh, be careful! I beg you be cautious; and when you want any escort let it be your father or Oberdon. Promise me, Lenore."

Her dark, gray eyes were full of high purpose, her cheeks just flushed with a delicious tinge that only rare excitement could conjure, and Lenore, looking in wonderment on her, was secretly amazed at her earnest interest. But she merely laughed. This time in real amusement.

"Promises are not for me. If you think for a moment I intend to give up all my fun, and turn Quaker, why, you're tremendously mistaken, that's all. Coming down to dinner?"

She sprang lightly from among the scarlet cushions as the bell rung, her face as care free as a child's; her shiny brown eyes dancing with merriment.

Edna turned away from her with a thrill that was almost contempt, for her carelessness.

"I am going in a moment. Don't wait for me."

Lenore suddenly stopped in the middle of the room, her face losing its archness, her eyes glooming even angrily.

"See here, Edna Sylvester, I know what you are going to wait for. You intend to waylay papa as he goes in to dinner and tattle about me. But if you do—"

Her face betrayed her sentiments better than words could have expressed them.

"I have no idea of 'waylaying' your father,



Lenore," Edna returned, in quiet hauteur. "If I choose to warn him against your conduct, I certainly shall do so, whenever and however I desire."

Lenore's face fairly paled.

"You tell if you dare! You'll rue the day if—"

But Edna walked quietly past her, into the hall, and descended to the dining-room.

While Lenore, trembling with rage, stood looking after her, vowing terrible revenge in a vague way; and so of the two women who sat down to break bread at the same table with Edna, both were enemies; and the man who should have protected and cherished her, gazed at her pale, high-bred face, and cursed the hour she had fallen in his hands and home.

### CHAPTER III.

#### WHO WAS THE SPY?

THE lights in Mr. Saxton's parlor were turned down to a delicious twilight radiance; the warm atmosphere was laden with faint perfume from the conservatory adjoining; while from the distant music-room came strains of sweetest melody, conjured by Lenore's skillful fingers, who, as she played, little thought whom she entertained, and how.

Edna Silvester had dressed herself in her black silk traveling-dress for that last, formal evening at home. She was attired very plainly, almost to severity, and yet Oberdon Audrey, when he looked at her from the opposite end of the large oriel window, thought never had she looked fairer than in her plain costume of black, enlivened only by the narrow embroidered linen collar and cuffs, and the set of heavy gold jewelry she wore.

He was looking at her very earnestly as she sat, half-wearily, leaning her head against the curve of the *tete-a-tete*, that nestled so cosily within the window. She had drawn one scarlet satin curtain so that any one entering the room would scarcely see her; and there she sat, so fair, so girlish, so utterly alone. They had been conversing on indifferent topics, listening to the witchery of the music, and enjoying, unconsciously, the quiet of the hour. Now, when Edna's pale, proud face sunk back against the vivid-hued cushion, and Mr. Audrey noted the sad longing in her wistful eyes, there came such tenderness in his heart for her that moved him to lean suddenly forward and kiss her.

Edna started; her cheek surged with blushes; then she turned her grave eyes in full inquiry upon him.

"I could not help it, Edna!" out of the fullness of the heart—"and I can't bear to see you looking so sad; especially when—when I would be so supremely happy if you would give me permission to kiss you as often as I pleased. Edna, dear, haven't you seen for a long while how I love you?"

He exchanged his seat for one on the *tete-a-tete* beside her; he took one of her hands in his, and waited for her to answer him.

At first Edna seemed bewildered; she looked at him with surprise in her eyes, and a questioning expression on her parted lips.

"Oh, Oberdon! what can you be thinking of?"

The words came half unwillingly. He smiled at her sweet shyness.

"Shall I tell you what I am thinking of? That Edna Silvester is the sweetest darling in all the world, and that I will be the happiest man living if she will give herself to me. Edna, look at me, and tell me you will be my wife!"

The tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, Oberdon, please don't! Indeed I can not! indeed I never have thought of such a thing!"

"Think of it now! Oh, Edna, surely you will not disappoint me so?"

For a moment she snatched a glance, and saw how white his face was.

"You would not have me say I cared for you when I don't—I mean the way you wish? As a friend I can love you, Oberdon, but oh! forget you asked me to be your wife."

Her voice was full of womanly sympathy, and her beautiful eyes, fringed by their tear-pearled lashes, looked pleadingly at his.

He made no answer for a moment; his mouth twitched under the heavy black mustache that covered it, and Edna saw how his eyes seemed full of pain.

"I—I—see I am mistaken. I can not comprehend why, hardly. I was so sure you would accept my love; I wanted yours so; I knew you were not happy here, with the Saxtons, and I dreamed of such a dear home of our own. Edna, this is awful."

Her own heart was beating fast, and it gave a

thrill of anguish when she saw the power her simple word had over this lover of hers. She knew he had a grand heart; she knew he was a thorough nobleman in principle and action; she knew—now that he said so—that he loved her; she wanted some one to care for her so.

It suddenly came upon her—this temptation to accept Oberdon Audrey's offer of marriage—not because she loved him, for she did not, but because his arms would be such a quiet retreat for her whom no one else seemed to want.

Should she give herself to him, and let his great love for her suffice for both? Perhaps in time to come she would learn to care for him as he cared for her; should she risk it?

Audrey saw the flush come to her face, usually so pale; he saw the glitter in her eyes, the stern compression of the dainty red lips.

"Oh, Edna, you are reconsidering? You will let me take you? Edna, my darling, only let me prove how good I will be to you!"

"Oberdon," and his name sounded almost in a gasp from the sorely tempted girl, "I can not. If I loved you I would say so; but I dare not give my hand where I can not lay my heart. Oh, I wish I could, for your sake."

Then he knew—he who had studied her so—that his sweet dream of love with Edna Silvester was over.

"Let me say good-by, then, and go away where I can fight down this horrid trouble. And, Edna, promise me if ever trouble comes, and you need me for any thing, you will send or tell me. Promise, Edna!"

He drew her face down to his breast, and held it there while he looked, as if he never could stop, down in her pure, sad eyes, at her red, quivering lips. Then he kissed her, over and over: on cheek and brow and hair; then he held her off at arm's length, with that hungry, pitiful gaze in his black eyes.

"You promise me, Edna, that if ever you want a friend, a protector, a counselor, it shall be I?"

"Indeed, dear Oberdon, it shall be you."

He suddenly strained her closely to him, pressed a long, long kiss on her mouth, and as abruptly left her. Still the strains of the music went on; still the warm, perfumed air floated around her, but Edna was not the same Edna. A master-hand had touched the sealed fountain in her heart, that, true to its all-unconscious allegiance, sprung forth at the summons.

A lover's kisses had touched her lips; a lover's clinging arms had embraced her, and passionate words fallen on her awe-struck ears.

She sat there, in the twilight, stunned, dazed by it all. Oberdon, her friend, her brother—Oberdon, her lover—Oberdon, her discarded suitor.

Then a swift, sharp pang went shooting through her newly-awakened heart; poor, poor Oberdon! how it wounded her to grieve him so, who had always been so gentle, so kind to her.

Poor, dear Oberdon! how splendid he looked with his face all love-lighted, pleading his cause so eloquently; and when he held her against him, raining kisses on her flushing face, how his pale beauty had gone straight to her woman's heart!

And Edna felt her heart throbbing with a sensation that was painfully delicious; while away down deep, came softly, slowly, the wondering question, self-asked, "could she have possibly been mistaken? Then, of a sudden, the music ceased, the gas was turned on in blinding brilliancy, and Mr. and Mrs. Saxton and Lenore were there with her.

So the episode ended—it was the first actual event in Edna Silvester's pure, girlish life; she had acted as her conscience told her was best, at the moment of decision; and now, after the moment had passed, and her decision had gone irrecoverably forth, if her woman's heart suddenly awoke from its eighteen years of slumber, it was hardly her fault.

And yet, had Edna Silvester acted contrary to her pure, noble instincts; had she accepted Oberdon Audrey because of the restfulness he could give her, and she so wanted, this romance would never have been; for on her refusal hung the happiness and misery of others beside herself, whose woof and warp of life was so singularly and fatefully to be woven in the webs of hers.

Now that Mr. Saxton and his wife, and Lenore came in upon her, Edna resolutely banished her reverie, and began talking gayly as she could, when she noticed a white wrath on Mrs. Saxton's features, that was mirrored, almost as plainly, in Mr. Saxton's, and indicated by surprise on Lenore's.

She was astonished, but had not long to wait to have it explained.

"Perhaps you will allow us to congratulate you on your remarkable good luck in securing an offer of marriage from Mr. Oberdon Audrey?"

The offensive tones jarred on Edna's ears; she lifted her head proudly, and looked Mrs. Saxton full in the eyes—full of malicious anger. "I do not comprehend you," she returned, quietly.

"No? One would think a person so capable of maneuvering—"

A sudden, loud, sneering laugh from Lenore interrupted her mother.

"And she said, only this afternoon, that she and Mr. Audrey were only friends!"

Edna met Lenore's gaze with the same proud silence that scorned to explain a truth she knew was sacredly confidential; and yet, her eyes began to flash at the vile insinuation of "managing to secure an offer!"

"We will let the subject drop," said Mr. Saxton, stiffly. "And we will make our adieux tonight, as the carriage will take you away before we rise in the morning."

He extended his hand, and said "good-by;" his wife bowed coldly; and Lenore laughed and nodded. And that was her "good-by!" while her thoughts were roving here and there, wondering who told of Oberdon's offer; wondering who knew.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE BEAUTIFUL DRAGON'S TRAIL.

No one in the grand house on Madison avenue missed Edna when she had gone, or cared whether she were happy or miserable at Mt. Eden; if possible, Mrs. Saxton's dislike of her had acquired fresh impetus from the hour she heard that Edna had received an offer of marriage from Oberdon Audrey.

Rachelle had heard Edna and Oberdon; not accidentally either, because she was constantly at Edna's heels, consequent upon Mr. Saxton's commands.

Edna's refusal of Mr. Audrey's offer did not in the least ameliorate Mrs. Saxton's unfriendliness; rather, it fired her jealousy still hotter to think Edna had the opportunity to reject what it was her ambition to secure for Lenore.

Now, after Mr. Audrey's proposal, the very *contretemps* she had tried to prevent, Mrs. Saxton was more convinced than ever that Edna was well out of sight, because she knew, with her keen, intuitive perception, that even if Edna had refused Mr. Audrey, she could not but help regret the rejection, and in all probability receive another which she would accept.

It was a very good thing, then, that Edna Silvester was well away from the handsome house on Madison avenue, where there was so much and to spare—except for her; that she was so well removed, not only from sight but from hearing; for at Mt. Eden no correspondence was allowed whatever.

It certainly seemed that all things were working for good; and Mrs. Saxton, as she sat before the grate in her dressing-room, toasting her slippered feet, smiled triumphantly in anticipation of the time when her ambitions would be crowned with gratifying success.

She was very anxious to secure Oberdon Audrey for Lenore; she and her husband had compacted to leave no stone unturned to accomplish the desirable *parti*; but, knowing the girl's willfulness, her waywardness, and knowing there was always a strong possibility of her refusal to marry the lover of Edna Silvester, Mrs. Saxton had long ago decided on another eligible gentleman—and one of the two suitors Lenore should accept, giving the preference to Oberdon Audrey.

For an hour Mrs. Saxton had been sitting there, absently caressing her shapely white hands, or twirling the flashing jewels on her fingers; and Rachelle Hunt, from the side window where she sat mending one of Lenore's late overskirts, occasionally glanced up in curious watchfulness.

"Has Mr. Audrey called to-day?"

Mrs. Saxton broke the silence at last by the question that plainly indicated the tenor of her thoughts.

"Not to-day. I think he hardly cares to come since Miss Edna went away."

A sour expression crossed Mrs. Saxton's face ere she replied.

"We'll teach him that Lenore is as good as Edna, any day. I shall tell him over and over of all Edna's contemptible faults, until he sees with my eyes how very far inferior she is to Lenore."

A quiet smile played on Rachelle's face that did not escape Mrs. Saxton's attention.



"You are incredulous?"

"I am. I know Mr. Audrey too well to think he will be swayed from his allegiance to Edna Silvester for a moment. I think he will attribute your language to the true motive."

Mrs. Saxton flushed a trifle.

"Well, I think not, and at all events I shall leave no stone unturned to abuse Edna to him. He shall forget her, or—"

Her suddenly compressed lips finished her threat quite as forcibly as any words could have done.

Rachelle carefully went on with her delicate task; and Mrs. Saxton leaned back in her chair again for several minutes. Then a low laugh, as if suggested by some sudden recollection, escaped her.

"I was so amused to see Mr. Saxton the day I suggested we should send Edna to Mt. Eden again."

Her bright eyes wore in them an expression strangely at variance with her light pleasantry. She studied Rachelle's face so intently that when Rachelle looked suddenly up and confronted her, she started and flushed as if detected in a guilty act.

"Perhaps Mr. Saxton thinks, as I do, that there are more reasons than one for sending a charming young girl off to boarding-school."

She said it so quietly, with such exasperating suggestiveness, that Mrs. Saxton could have struck her.

"I am not sure I comprehend you, Rachelle," she returned, haughtily. "You do not mean to insinuate any thing?"

She spoke rapidly, eagerly, and seemed to fairly hang upon the answer so long coming. For Rachelle folded up the completed task, wrapped its dainty, filmy whiteness in a satin damask napkin, and laid the precious parcel in the boudoir safe under lock and key, before she ventured on a reply.

"I do not mean to insinuate anything, Mrs. Saxton. You have known me, and I you, long enough to warrant plain speaking between us. What I mean—rather what I know is, that Edna Silvester is not to inherit her fortune, or have a chance to secure her a lover, if you can help it."

She looked Mrs. Saxton fully in the face as she spoke in her low, unexcited voice; and Mrs. Saxton's face never changed a muscle as she listened. Only by a gloomy red light that seemed to emanate from her black eyes did she give token of the intense interest she felt.

"And you, Rachelle, will help me win both for my child?"

"Have I ever refused you any thing? What shall I do? I have spied on her up to her departure, and now—what?"

"I hardly know what, myself. I know or care nothing beyond the fact that I would give a thousand dollars to know Lenore was Edna Silvester's triumphant rival."

Mrs. Saxton shivered a little, and held out her hands over the blaze.

"You would have forty-nine thousand left. Rather an unequal division."

Rachelle looked steadily in Mrs. Saxton's eyes as she awaited the answer.

"I will give you a check for five thousand in return for an oath of secrecy—on the day my plans mature."

She laid her cool hand on Rachelle's; her eyes were full of a concentrated light that made them appear as if they radiated instead of receiving it.

Her breast heaved in short, quick motions, and Rachelle felt a muscular spasm of the clinging fingers.

"You will give me a vacation when I ask for it, and pay my expenses?"

A smile accompanied her quiet request.

"Whenever you ask it, as long as you please, and as much money as you want."

Rachelle nodded her head carelessly, in acceptance.

"Consider it settled; and the subject dismissed until—"

A call from below summoned Rachelle to Lenore; and Isidore Saxton sat in the darkening twilight, singing a sort of mute jubilate in her heart.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TEMPTED HEART.

THE long winter evenings around Madame Flyaway's study-table were slipping by, slowly and not very delightfully, at least to Miss Silvester, who, as head pupil in the Mt. Eden Institute, had enough to do in assisting less fortunate ones, who were more prompt to avail themselves of her assistance, than to discover for themselves what Edna had discovered for herself.

It had been two months now, since Edna's re-

turn to Mt. Eden, two long, weary months since the night Oberdon Audrey had told her of his love for her, and she had told him she could not accept it. Since then, Edna had passed through strange experiences; and not the least distressing was the news that Mrs. Saxton positively made a point of telling in her short, periodical letters, of Mr. Audrey's continual intimacy at the house; of his drives and rides with Lenore, of their engagements for theater and opera, and of the *on dit* that somehow was rumored of its looking very like "a match."

At first, Edna smiled in contempt. She, who knew Oberdon so well, would never credit him with forgetting her so soon, so easily. She felt a satisfied sort of contempt in believing that Mrs. Saxton was trying, and very vainly, to heap added insult to the one perpetrated before she left home. Then there gradually began to develop in her feelings, one of dull, dumb pain that Oberdon could even pay the least attention to any one, after he had declared he loved only herself. Then, somehow or other, she wished she could forget him, and Lenore and everybody; she wished she had only *one friend* in all the wide world to whom she could go with her home-sick, heart-sick cares. True, she had promised Oberdon to let him be her friend, always and ever, but if it was true that he was becoming devoted to Lenore Saxton, what need had he of her friendship?

But was he really attentive to Lenore? Mrs. Saxton's statements she could not believe; and so between doubt and fear she alternated, until one day, in her usual weekly letter from home, there came wedding-cards—Lenore's and Oberdon's!

It was hardly what one might call a blow to Edna; and yet it hurt her, wounded her to her heart's core, that Oberdon Audrey had forgotten her so soon.

After that Edna sought to forget it all; and she succeeded, she thought, aided by a certain gentleman who lived very near Mt. Eden Institute.

This Garnett Fay was the nephew of the courtly old lady who lived on the adjoining property to Mme. Flyaway; a stylish, handsome fellow, whose blue eyes and handsome hair, added to a genial air and gallant devotedness, attracted attention.

For several weeks he had passed the window of Edna's room, night and morning, on his way to and from the rural depot. At first he had only glanced carelessly in, and Edna had merely thought "what a handsome man." Later, his gaze was a trifle more marked, while perfectly respectful; and then, one bright afternoon, when Mme. Flyaway and her elder pupils were playing croquet on the lawn, and old Mrs. Fay and Garnett had passed by, and paused to watch the game, what else could Mme. do than introduce the ladies and gentlemen?

And so it began. Day after day the two had met; from acquaintance to friendship, and now—

On Edna's lap, as she sat by the window, looking out on the wintry landscape, there was lying a letter from Garnett Fay, and this is what it said:

"MISS EDNA: You will not censure me for being too precipitate in offering you my truest affection, and asking in return, your consent to love me, and be my own? Ever since I knew you, Edna, I have loved you, and while I know you have expressed no preference particularly for me, still I am presumptuous enough to hope you will make me proud and happy by accepting me."

To Edna, this letter seemed very manly, very straightforward; and, as it lay in her passive hands, she wondered what her duty was in regard to it.

Once before she had refused an offer of marriage; and though now, as she watched the cold twinkling of the stars, and she was constrained to admit it had been an unwise thing, she knew that with it, and him who offered it, she was forever done.

She was so lonely; never before had she realized it as here at school again; other girls had parents, houses, friends; she had less than nothing. She so wanted one—only one near one, dear one, with whom to talk, to whom to go, who would make her interest theirs.

Did she love Garnett Fay? It seemed as if the Fates were making a plaything of her heart; casting it first toward Oberdon Audrey, then back to her again; then at Garnett Fay, this handsome lover of hers, whose blue eyes could hold such intense devotion; this lover, who was all grace, all tenderness, all adoration.

No; she answered the question bravely as she had answered it once before. She did not love Garnett Fay any more than she had loved Ober-

don Audrey. At least, not as she firmly thought a woman should love, who gave herself to her husband for aye.

Would she ever experience such a thoroughness of affection? Had she not possibly become cold-hearted? More probably never had a warm, affectionate, womanly nature, such as her ideal woman always possessed as her greatest glory?

Again, was it likely she should have another offer of marriage, and was it not better for her to change her condition while she might? for the very contemplation of going on through life as she was then going, made her heart sink.

So she reasoned—she, who was yearning so for a soul mate. And then, when she had concluded her logic, it was with the verdict—"I will marry him!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### NETTING THE BIRD.

"How can I thank you, Edna? how can I prove my delight at your consent? Dearest, a lifetime can only contain the gratitude I feel."

Garnett Fay had met her, very unexpectedly to her, on the road between the Institute and the village, whither she had gone to make purchases.

He caught her hand and drew her to his side as they walked along.

"Your note, though short, was so sweet; only less sweet than yourself, Edna."

He looked down in her pure eyes, and on her cheeks, that flushed under the ardor of his gaze and language.

"I could only tell you my final conclusions, Mr. Fay—"

"Edna! I am never again "Mr. Fay" to you. Remember!"

He smiled at her, disarming thus his assumption of tyranny.

"I will try to remember; only first, let me tell you my reasons for accepting your offer of marriage. After you learn them you may reject me."

She smiled at her own words, and looked up, half-timidly to him. It was so strange, so sweet, to have some one to talk to who really cared.

"Reject you, my darling! never, though you acknowledged you took me to get rid of my importunities."

As he spoke he stooped his head and kissed her white forehead.

"But when I tell you I want to learn to love you very, very dearly; when I confess I am marrying you because I am so lonely, so miserable—you do not recall what you have said?"

"Not a word of it! You are still just the sweetest, truest, bravest little girl I ever saw, and your frank confession only makes me admire you more, and love you the better."

"Then, Mr. — then, Garnett," and she raised her shy, sweet eyes truthfully to his, "I am your betrothed wife. I will try to do my duty, and I am sure you will never have occasion to find fault with me."

Her voice was softly solemn, and she leaned her light form more heavily on his arm, as if, those words once spoken, she dropped anchor there and pinned her faith forever fast.

In silence they walked slowly on under the bare, leafless avenue of elms, intent on their private thoughts; and when they reached the gate that led to Mrs. Fay's grounds, Garnett paused.

"Edna, when shall we be married? You will not make me wait long, will you? There is no reason why it need be postponed at all."

He was caressing her hand that was incased in its thick gauntlet.

"Mme. Flyaway will object, of course. Other than her no one cares."

There was a wail of sadness in her words that would have touched the heart of her worst enemy.

"And Mme. Flyaway need not be consulted. Marry me at once—to-night—my darling, and let me bring you to aunt Ella. She will love you; and with me to stand between you and the world, will you care for aught beside?"

Edna's heart was throbbing so wildly; it was all so strange, so unreal. Married! married that very night! One act, and thereby separated from the loneliness and the uncared-for-ness of her life!

It was very sudden, this proposal; she had thought to learn more of Garnett Fay, of his disposition, his character during their engagement. And now, he seemed too much a stranger to be so soon nearest, best, all to her.

Of course, at the very first, both Mrs. Fay and Garnett had presented testimonials to Mme. Flyaway, who had become very friendly with



the old lady; and Edna had heard Mme. say of what a remarkably fine family they came."

While she was mentally discussing all this, Garnett stooped toward her.

"I am tyrannical, dearest. You *shall* be my bride to-night. Meet me, little one, at this spot, at eight o'clock, and I will be here to take you to the village church."

He kissed her and let her go. She watched him away, and then, with strange forebodings walked slowly up the Institute walks.

A large, regularly furnished apartment it was, upholstered in pale yellow satin; with a bright coal-fire burning in an illuminated stove that reflected its ruddy light most cheerily in the dusk that had already fallen. The red beams plainly disclosed the open piano, with its piles of new music; the cozy lounging-chairs and sofas that were arranged so tastily and invitingly in fire-lighted nooks, by the large malachite center-table that stood under the chandelier, or dotted here and there beside tiny tables where one might lay one's sewing, play a game of chess, or examine the magnificent revolving stereoscopes, as fancy dictated.

By the long French window that faced the road leading to the side-entrance, a lady stood, intently watching, as if for the expected appearance of some one who had been detained on the way.

She was not a young woman, neither to be called old; perhaps the convenient term "old maid" was the best that could be applied to her, as regarded her appearance, rather than her manners.

She was slightly under the average height, with a graceful, well-rounded figure that was admirably dressed in a black silk dinner toilette. Her eyes must have been black, judging from the jetty hue of her hair and eyebrows, whose perfect smoothness and massiveness suggested the skillful art of the hair-dealer rather than that of Nature. The thick, green glasses she wore—Miss Fay acknowledged to be growing near-sighted and weak-eyed as she grew older—utterly defied investigation of what was beneath them; but one little cared to know more of Miss Fay, after her charming conversation once won one; that was enough to engage every whit of attention.

Since the Fays had come to this spacious, elegant place—"Sunset View" they called it—it was astonishing what friends they had made, what *prestige* they had gained in the vicinity.

Miss Fay—"auntie" her handsome nephew called her—laughingly and frankly admitted she was too old now ever to get married, and so she had centered her hopes, ambition and affections on "her boy"—Garnett.

It was evident they were rich—their surroundings, their servants indicated that. It became very soon patent they were highly respectable, for they bore letters of introduction to the village minister, the physician, and Mme. Flyaway—the three magnates; and the letters were from Mr. Grandon Saxton, of Madison avenue, whose name was as good as gold.

Edna Sylvester had only learned this latter fact very lately; the evening after she parted from her lover at the gate, and promised to meet him at eight o'clock.

Quite accidentally, amid all her misgiving, she heard at the Institute, from Madame's own lips, that Mr. Grandon Saxton indorsed the new neighbors at "Sunset View." And then Edna felt she could trust any one so recommended.

All this while, ever since Garnett Fay had gone out to meet Edna, on her way home, Miss Fay had waited and watched at the window for his return. And now, after an hour's tireless patience, he was coming; she saw him raise his hat to Edna, and watched him hasten up the path to the entrance.

He came in quickly, with a bold, vigorous step, and bringing the freshness of the cool winter day in his garments.

He laid aside his overcoat—a heavy beaver, edged with fur, and trimmed with elegant frog buttons—on the hall rack, hung his hat beside it, and laid his gloves on the tiny shelf before he came into Miss Fay's immediate presence. When he entered the room, it was with a smile on his face whose triumph could not be mistaken.

"Garnett! you are successful! I can read it in your eyes."

"Yes, I have succeeded. Edna and I are to be married to-night, at eight o'clock."

His tones were quiet enough, but beneath was a suppressed excitement that, for the moment, seemed to communicate itself to the lady. A vivid crimson spot suddenly burned on her cheeks, and she turned abruptly away from the window and swept up to Garnett, standing directly in front of him.

"No! You surely do not bring me such glorious news as that?"

A look of anxiety, lighted by hopefulness, was on her face; and then she removed her glasses, that no one in the neighborhood save her nephew had ever seen her without; and then one saw how intensely black were her eyes, and how bushy and inky were the brows, how jetty the lashes.

"It is glorious news, isn't it? I never before earned fifty thousand dollars so easily and so pleasantly. 'Pon honor, auntie, I could fall in love with my pretty little Edna without the least trouble, were it not for my other attraction—'Jessica,' you know."

Miss Fay's lip curled.

"Will you never have done with your boyish flirtations? I am tired of hearing of this 'Jessica.' How do you know but that she is some brazen girl—of course she is no lady, or she never would have made your acquaintance as she did."

"Not *my* acquaintance, auntie; she never heard of Garnett Fay. She is corresponding with 'Lord Ulmerstone.'"

He laughed, and leaned back lazily in his chair, looking, as Miss Fay thought, handsome enough, and graceful enough to win any girl's heart.

"I think my Jessica is rich, auntie, because she says—"

She waved her hand impatiently.

"Don't talk of her again. What will she, or any other girl be to you after you are married to Edna Sylvester?"

Garnett smiled oddly.

"That will make no difference, auntie mine. You see I must love somebody, and it will not be my wife."

"While you willingly accept her fortune."

Miss Fay said it dryly.

"Exactly. Fifty thousand 'll last quite a while, and Edna is a nice little girl enough."

"She is a noble girl; altogether too good for you, Garnett, and I can't see why you don't care for her, since you have made her believe so; she loves you, I know."

"No, she don't," he returned, quickly. "She confessed that, and several other misgivings. So you see we will be even on one score."

Miss Fay walked slowly up and down the long room, where the flashes from the fire made weird shadows of her moving figure. She seemed thinking deeply; and Garnett watched her lazily for several minutes before he arose from his chair.

"I'd like some dinner; and at a quarter of eight I want Jerry with the brougham, at the side door. I'll bring Edna back here, auntie. Her room is ready?"

Miss Fay bowed assent, and Garnett gave her his arm into the dining-parlor.

"Have Marshalls set lunch for us, auntie, will you? and at half-past eight be ready to congratulate me."

He threw her a kiss as he went up-stairs to make some change in his toilette.

He stood before his dressing case, carefully combing his luxuriant blonde side-whiskers, whose curling points rested on his broad breast; he was looking very well he thought, and hesitated before he exchanged his black vest and necktie for white.

"Fifty thousand dollars! Well, I have come to the conclusion it's worth it, if it does come in Edna Sylvester's hand. I wonder what my piquant little Jessica would say if she knew her adoring 'Vivian' was preparing, like the innocent lamb he is, for the slaughter? But Jessica will not know; and the delightful little episode can continue as before."

He arranged his narrow white satin bow to his satisfaction, and selected his gloves; then began his colloquy again:

"I wonder where aunt Ella learned all this regarding Miss Sylvester? She knows her well, and yet Edna can not recall my auntie's name; she will recognize her, of course, when I present them."

He had drawn on his white glove, and stood admiring the shapely hand.

"I'll take precious good care of that fifty thousand—and Edna; likewise Jessica."

He sauntered leisurely down-stairs to find the coachman awaiting him in the hall. He entered the carriage; Jerry mounted the box, and Garnett Fay was off to be married to Edna Sylvester.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DECEIVING AND DECEIVED.

As Edna Sylvester had predicted, her departure from Mr. Saxton's house gave free rein to Lenore's pitiful tendencies. This was the fact

for three especial reasons, and Lenore herself recognized them as such.

Edna's presence had been a sort of negative safeguard over Lenore from the fact that Lenore was afraid of her father, and she knew Edna would not shrink from the task, were it ever so painful, of acquainting him with his daughter's conduct if it seemed heinous in Edna's honest eyes.

Again, besides the removal of this bridle on her recklessness, Lenore missed Edna more than she had thought possible. She found that Edna had been an entertaining companion, even while she was a fearless mentor; and Lenore, quite naturally, desired something or some one to take the place left vacant by Edna.

But the chief reason—the source of Edna's greatest apprehension—was her own inherent love of excitement; the restless longing after romance, adventure, that she had drawn in with her mother's milk. And this unfortunate taste, added to a vanity as deep-rooted as the breath she drew, and a liking for the society of gentlemen—a fashionable and deplorable fault to be met with every day—all this combination of characteristics had tended to make of Lenore Saxton, with her wonderful beauty, her extreme self-assurance, and her remarkable tact, a most egregious coquette.

So she had flirted, to her heart's content; flirted until the novelty even of breaking vows was an *ennuye* pastime, and she sighed for fresh fields of conquest, new modes of warfare.

And thus it came about that she "answered an advertisement" that, to New York's shame be it recorded, appeared in the columns of a prominent popular paper.

It must be admitted, pityingly, that Lenore hardly had a thought of what she was doing, beyond the insatiable desire for novelty and excitement. She, in common with many a girl who will read this—and for whom this is written, that they may accept Lenore's experience for themselves, and avoid the first step to the pitfall she found; Lenore, as other giddy-headed girls, thought there surely was no harm in a private correspondence with a strange man who advertised himself as rich, with plenty of leisure, a disposition for romantic friendship, and an admirer of strictly brunette beauty to whom he appealed for correspondence; and then signed *such* an exquisite name—Ulmerstone.

A very captivating letter, Lenore wrote him—arch, piquant, and altogether charming; one that any man could not have helped being pleased with. She signed her name "Jessica," and so the correspondence was inaugurated a week after Edna Sylvester had gone back to Mt. Eden.

Lenore was deeply interested in Ulmerstone's letters, written in such a splendid hand, with such faultless capitals, and small, correctly-shaded running letters. The envelopes and sheets were stamped with a monogram, "V. U.," wreathed in immortelles, and above it was a crest, the crest of the ancient family of "Ulmerstone-Vivians," who had come over with William the Conqueror, and who lived now in England in their palatial castle.

He—this Vivian of hers—was traveling in America for pleasure; he thanked his good fairy and all presiding deities that he had met his charming Jessica—spiritually met, of course—before he returned to the baronial halls of his ancestors; and he hoped the day was not distant when he would receive her sweet consent to let him visit her, and physically see what he had so long known, his dearest friend, Jessica.

About these letters there was just a tinge of romance that suited Lenore admirably; and not for a moment did she doubt the truth of an assertion her ardent admirer made. Daily she thought of him; hourly, I might say, until there was but one person in all the wide world to her, and he—a stranger she had never seen.

To do them justice, Mr. and Mrs. Saxton had not the slightest idea of the condition of affairs. Mr. Saxton delegated the care of Lenore to his wife, and she in her immense pride for her daughter, never for a moment supposed she was not perfection, through and through.

So, unsuspected, unguarded, Lenore Saxton allowed the first love of her girlish heart to go forth, gradually, it is true, but strong in its slow growth, toward this lover who had won her with his pen.

She had never even seen his picture; she hardly thought what kind of face his must be; she had asked him of course what he looked like, and when he banteringly returned that he was neither "fair nor dark, but a sort of mongrel whom every one offered the prize for ugliness," she felt, with a thrill of satisfaction, that he



must be handsome to afford such wholesale depreciation of his charms.

Contrary to most girls' habit, Lenore had taken no one to her confidence; alone she enjoyed her delight, and alone she risked.

If she was absent-minded, it was not sufficiently marked to excite her parents' remark; but one evening, when she came down to dinner, her mother at once noticed her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"I suspect Mr. Audrey has been here while I was out driving; is that so, Lenore?"

Her mother smiled over the low, silver sugar basin.

A deeper tint darkened her daughter's cheeks, and her lip just curled the least in the world.

"Mr. Audrey! How many times must I tell you, mamma, that I wouldn't give *that* for Mr. Audrey?"

She spoke with a vehemence unusual for her, and then lifted a tiny chip of egg-shell in her finger.

Mr. Saxton just glanced up from his coffee he was slowly sipping; and her mother's face instantly relaxed from the fond arch smile into a cold reproach.

"You need not be so emphatic, Lenore. Besides, I am not sure that Mr. Audrey cares sufficiently for you to warrant such a rash display of temper."

If Mrs. Saxton thought to surprise Lenore into a confession of any act, she was disappointed, for Lenore said not a word further on the subject, but went on quietly with her fried ortolan and pineapple fritters.

But Mrs. Saxton observed the excitement, so intense and still kept so determinedly down, that manifested itself in Lenore's scarlet cheeks and bright eyes, and, as the girl gracefully but decisively excused herself from dessert, her mother wondered what was the occasion of it all.

To tell the truth, such demeanor rather annoyed Mrs. Saxton. She preferred the cold, impassive behavior that locked within its unemonstrative arms the emotions that were glowing and kindling beneath; she liked, for instance, Edna Silvester's cool manner that so effectually misled one.

To be sure she had no idea of what it was that was so working on Lenore; or, if she gave it a thought, beyond the one that it was not Oberdon Audrey after all, Mrs. Saxton charitably ascribed it to some passing girlish flirtation; smiled serenely at thought of Lenore's beautiful face and Hebe form—and forgot it all in the all-absorbing interest she took in another direction.

Affairs were progressing finely regarding Edna Silvester; Rachelle Hunt had asked and been granted a three months' vacation. The sum of money she demanded—large, unseemly large though it was—Mrs. Saxton had unhesitatingly given her for current expenses. And now, when Rachelle had been gone nearly the entire three months, when letters came regularly stating that all was well, and especially when Rachelle had written in her last, most heavily underscored, that "EDNA SILVESTER would never trouble Mrs. Saxton again," it was little wonder that in her satisfaction on that account, other and minor matters slipped by; even if it concerned her darling Lenore.

And Lenore?

Her step was quicker than was wont as she went up the velvet-covered grand staircase, from the base of which to the roof of the house was a large, octagonal opening, whose covering was richly-tinted glass, that lent subdued luster over the costly paintings and statuary that were arranged in the gallery on the second floor.

A rosewood railing surrounded and closed in the gallery, and against the carved panels Lenore leaned, in flushed fatigue, after her hurried ascent.

She stood there a moment, then drew from her pocket a letter, so short that it seemed impossible to be the cause of her agitation.

She read it the twentieth time.

"My dear little Jessica," it said, in its elegant handwriting, "how delighted I am that Fate has ordained our meeting. Very unexpectedly I find I have urgent occasion to be passing through Jersey City on Thursday night; will my charming little unknown meet me at eight o'clock at the depot of the Pennsylvania R. R.? Wear a suit of entire black; I will know you thereby if a dozen others wore the same. And I, little Jessica, will make known to you your admiring VIVIAN."

And this was Thursday! and it was six o'clock by the diamond-crusted little watch at her belt! And he was so near!

Was it any wonder she fairly trembled with nervous excitement? And, knowing her as we

do, was it any wonder that she donned her black cashmere street suit, rich in its elegant adornment of costly lace?

She wore her jetty boa and muff; she fastened a black lace veil over her velvet turban, with its shiny ebon feather—and went to her fate.

Not secretly or silently either.

She did not creep out the grand entrance, as though a thousand avenging angels were on her track, or skulk guiltily past the open parlor door.

She deliberately summoned Satan to her aid, and went in to her parents with a lie on her lips.

"Mamma, I want the carriage this evening. I am going to Jennie Slater's."

Mrs. Saxton looked up in languid surprise.

"To Jennie Slater's? to Jersey City this bitter night? What for, Lenore?"

"Oh, tableaux, I think she said."

So she went off, through the illuminated vestibule, down the marble steps, and into the warm, close carriage, whose lanterns were almost shamed by the glitter in her black eyes.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STEP IN THE DARK.

At Mt. Eden the pupils, with one exception, were assembled in their various study-rooms, around the long green-baize-covered tables, guarded at both ends by watchful, silent teachers.

Throughout the building, aside from these class-rooms, the lights were burning dimly, with two exceptions—one was in Mme. Flyaway's private parlor, where, this evening, she was entertaining two or three friends, and the other in the window of Edna Silvester's room, in the third floor of the massive brick edifice.

Edna, being a pupil of the "extra" class, that only numbered a half-dozen, had easily secured an excuse from attendance on Prof. Ell'oquente's lecture that evening; and, sitting all alone in her room, she was thinking, and planning, and wondering, till her head fairly ached.

This step she was on the verge of taking worried her, while at the same time it offered the only release from her lonely, loveless life.

She knew in the depths of her heart, that she did not entertain for Garnett Fay the feeling she wanted to entertain toward her husband. But, she argued to herself, should she permit that romantic creed of hers to step, a second time, between her and the new life she so wanted to begin, simply and only because she knew it would be unlike, and could be no worse than the old.

If Oberdon Audrey had only been true to the protestations he had made! If he only had waited a little; but he had not *really* loved her, or he would have waited, if for years, in the hope of her changing her verdict.

Well—and now, sitting so deliberately down, and facing her future, with all its probabilities and possibilities, things she would stretch out her hands, of her own free will, to take or reject—Edna realized, more keenly than she had done before, that she committed a mistake when she refused Oberdon Audrey.

It was a consolation, however, to know she had erred on the side of judgment, and what she conscientiously believed was duty to herself and him.

Now, for the last time, provided she married Garnett Fay, Edna permitted herself to acknowledge that she cared more for Oberdon than she wanted to, under the circumstances; he, Lenore Saxton's betrothed; she, Garnett Fay's.

She did not love him yet with all the vital intensity she believed herself capable of exerting toward the ideal some one, somewhere—and a vision of Oberdon's pleading face and earnest, impassioned eyes was conjured unexpectedly to her; but, by the dull, despairing pain that thrilled around her heart as she realized what a gulf separated them, and what a wide chasm that gulf would be in a few hours, in all human probability, she knew she had trifled—and so innocently—with the good that Fate had offered her.

Then, taking it for an example, ought she reject the present, perhaps last chance of redemption from her pitiful bondage?

She knew she could take to Garnett Fay a life as pure as the fresh-fallen snow from heaven. She was prepared to render him all the respect, all the great friendliness she really felt for him. She knew she would be a true, loyal wife to him, and in his protection, his cherishing care, his thoughtful affection, she must, surely, be content.

And then, might she not learn, later, as another lesson had begun to come to her under-

standing when she determinedly crushed it under foot—might not the same lesson come to her after her marriage?

Edna knew that, if gratitude and admiration and respect on her part, as she felt for her lover, were as promptly and constantly met by the same affection, thoughtfulness and consideration he had evinced since she knew him, she would, in all probability, be won by him.

And so, in the still and quiet of the darkening winter night, with the wind wailing bleakly around the bare school building, Edna solved the knotty problem of her destiny; and while her inmost heart, her noblest, best nature arose in a revolt, the tumult was promptly met and subdued by the potent forces of Reason and Duty.

That the Fays—especially Garnett—were recommended by her adopted father was a weighty influence in her favor; and so, with a long sigh of positive relief that her decision was made, Edna arose from her seat to prepare for her marriage.

Once or twice the unusually plaintive moan of the wind compelled her to instinctively pause and listen to its dirge-like cries. She had heard the legend that lost souls ride the winds of dry storms, and by their pitiful voices seek to warn erring mortals to avoid the path they followed and were led to everlasting unrest.

But Edna was not superstitious. The only thought that occurred to her was that it would be well for her to dress warmly, as the night promised to be intensely cold.

She put on a light-gray Irish poplin dress, made with a train and overskirt, elegantly and elaborately trimmed. Over the waist she wore a black lace basque; she gracefully knotted a black silk velvet sash, lined with white silk, at her side; a set of rare point lace lay in filmy beauty at throat and wrists; and the beautiful darkly-golden hair was combed back off her low forehead, over a Pompadour roll, falling in a dozen thick loose curls at the back, touching her shapely waist.

She was so fair to see; so inexpressibly lovely with that grave, troubled light in her eyes that would gloom there despite the firm, set expression on her mouth; and as she stood several minutes before the small glass that hung over the washstand, it seemed as if the gradual stormy wistfulness that gathered and darkened in her eyes was the token of the blackness of the darkness that was soon to overtake her.

But no one was there to tell her. No one was near to warn her, and only the wildly shrieking wind, whose burden she could not understand, bore her company on her fatal way.

Her hands were cold and trembling as she wrote a line on a sheet of French note, perfumed with heliotrope, and bearing the initial "S." in a maze of ivy leaves.

It was only this she said to Mme. Flyaway:

"I was married at eight o'clock. Mr. Fay and I will be pleased to see you at 'Sunset View.'"

EDNA.

She knew madame would not see it until the hour came to visit the dormitory, when, seeing the gleam of light under the door, she would come in, and—learn all.

By her watch, Edna saw it was five minutes of the trysting time; she had arranged her room before she dressed, and left her trunk packed to be in readiness when sent for; so, all that remained was to wrap her scarlet blanket-shawl around her, and tie a white cloud over her hair.

She was not nervous now; her hour of tremor and indecision was past, and she walked down the three pair of stairs as firmly and carelessly as when the bell summoned her to dinner.

No one met her in corridor or room; if any one had, even madame herself, it would not have mattered, for it was not unusual for Miss Silvester to spend an evening in the village occasionally.

At the door that commanded a view of the class-rooms, separated one from the other by glass partitions, Edna passed and gave a yearning look, with that feeling at heart that all students will remember, when they bade good-by to school.

Dim and ghostly the class-rooms lay in the uncertain moonlight, for the scudding clouds now revealed the round silver globe; and, phantom-like as well, the memory of the sharp struggles, the little disappointments, the unsatisfied longings, the impatient teachers, the imperfect recitations, glided silently and forever from the halls of Edna's memory.

Now, when she was leaving it for an untried life, there came to her—it has come to us all, some time, in some form—only remembrances of brightest spots, greenest roses in the desert; and, with eyes that filled with tears, she stepped



out from Mt. Eden's sheltering roof—into what? If she only had not! if she only had staid, and waited! And yet, she meant to do right; afterward, it was her one comfort to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that she meant well.

Now, drawing a long breath, full of wintry keenness, she hurried on to meet her lover. She had no thought for any one in the wide world now, but Garnett Fay. She had left everything for him, and for him, now that all things were left, she would bring all her sweet youth and its wealth of purity and trustfulness.

Just outside the rustic gate that defined the limits of Mme. Flyaway's grounds, Edna saw a carriage standing, and heard the impatient pawing of horses' hoofs. And then, Garnett Fay walked rapidly out of the shadow to meet her.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE REVELATION.

"I BEGAN to fear you would not come. I was afraid you had repented. You are very cold, dearest."

He drew her gloved hand through his arm, and clasped it with his own.

"We will hurry to the carriage. I wish now I had ordered the close coach, but I did not think it would blow up and so soon. But we will be home before long."

He was hastening her to the brougham; and as he talked, he looked down in her face, so pure and fair in the moonlight.

"Have I kept you waiting very long?" she asked. "I did not mean to."

Garnett smiled at her earnest inquiry.

"Waiting! I should say you did keep me waiting; an age, it seemed. I suppose it was actually five minutes, and that is why I wondered if you had repented. You do not regret your decision, my darling?"

They were in the brougham now, riding rapidly over the frozen road; and as Edna looked in her lover's face, when he asked the question, she wondered if he loved her so entirely as to worry over the idea of losing her? If it was not his love, his anxiety on her account, what caused that expression in his eyes, that eagerness for an answer that was denoted by his impatient waiting.

A little blush crept up on her face before she answered him.

"I did not repent, Garnett. I hope I never shall."

She bent her grave, sweet eyes on him with such utter, pleading confession in their depths, that a twinge of positive remorse swept across his mind as he thought how much he knew she would regret it; how little, personally, she had won him.

But now, strange thoughts were busy at work within his brain as he rode beside his betrothed bride to the altar. He marveled that he had never before thoroughly appreciated her sweet, womanly refinement, her childlike confidence in him. He would forget "Jessica"—if he could, and there was no doubt of that—and make himself worthy this girl bride, who, all unconscious, was bringing to him a means of living in the comfort he so liked.

So, when they alighted at the door of the small village church, and walked up the aisle to the humble altar, Garnett Fay felt a better man, for the silent influence of this girl who leaned on his arm, than he had felt in many a day.

It was only the work of a few minutes, and the marriage ceremony had united them. Only a few solemn words, but it forged a bond stronger than iron, heavier than lead.

The certificate, previously made out, needed only the name of the one witness—Jerry, the coachman. This was bunglingly made; the precious paper consigned to Garnett's vest pocket, and they were ready to return.

The coachman whipped his horses into a gallop; the brougham rattled and bounced over the frozen road, and in ten minutes they drew up at the brilliantly-illuminated entrance of Sunset View.

From within, glowing in the bright light, Edna could see the elegant adornments, and the warmth, and the comfort; and a thrill of sudden, sweet content stole over her.

In an unusual impulse—she was not a person of impulse, generally—she turned to Garnett as he sprung out to assist her down.

"Oh, Garnett, I will try, indeed I will, to deserve it all!"

He bent over, and touched her lips lightly.

"My wife!"

It was all the answer he made, but the strangeness, sweetness of the name touched Edna.

She brushed away the springing tears, and accepted her husband's offered arm up the steps, and into the warm hall.

"You had better let me show you your dressing-room, my dear, before we appear in the parlor. Take off your shawl and nubia, and arrange some flowers in your hair you will find there. I want aunt Ella's first impression to be good."

Edna assented willingly. She, too, preferred her husband's relative to see her at her best; and, how inexpressibly sweet it was, to be commanded so lovingly; how it suited her whole nature to obey such commands.

Garnett conducted her up the velvet-carpeted stairs, through the wide, warm, lighted hall, and showed her the suite of rooms intended for their use.

Then, with a parting kiss, and an injunction to wait till he came for her, he left her to prepare herself for the introduction to his aunt Ella.

Left alone, Edna drew a low-cushioned rocking-chair beside the open fireplace, and sat down to warm herself, and give herself up to the new, strange thoughts and feelings that had taken possession of her.

Was it possible she was his wife? could she really be married? and this was her home, and his? she, mistress of so much elegance, who, an hour before, was a poor school-girl, educated by the charity of Grandon Saxton!

True, all her life long she had been accustomed to luxury in its most luxuriant forms; true, this house, these surroundings were inferior to those at Madison avenue, but then, *there* she was made to feel she enjoyed them merely on sufferance; *here*, they were hers and her husband's.

Sitting by the fire, in the center of the front room, she could look through the three apartments that constituted the suit.

The furthest was the bedroom, and Edna saw how freshly white was the linen, ruffled and braided so elaborately; a gilt and white china set was on the marble-topped washstand, and on the dressing-case, each side the swinging mirror, on the marble-slabs, were perfumes, glove-boxes, and a jewel casket. The carpet was light green—perfectly plain, like a sheet of emerald velvet.

The central room, small and covered with a Persian drugget, was the bath-room; the one she was occupying, and the largest of the three, was her sitting and dressing-room.

A velvet carpet of bright rose-pink and gray covered the floor; chairs of gray damask with pink puffs, low footstools, a small book-case filled with new publications, an upright sewing stand of bamboo, vases of hot-house flowers, pictures of beautiful landscapes, curtains of pink, made this room a little gem of rooms.

Happy tears were surging to Edna's eyes as she thought how she could enjoy it all; how she would love Garnett, so handsome, so gentlemanly, so kind. And then, fearful lest he would come and find her still unprepared for accompanying him down-stairs, she at once began arranging the flowers she selected from the bouquets on the mantel.

She was still standing before the fire, idly arranging the tuberoses and orange buds, when she heard her name pronounced in a voice at once strangely familiar.

She looked around, but there was no one in the room; she walked through to the last room of the suit, but failed to find any one; then, returning to the mantel again, listened for its repetition.

In a second she heard voices; undoubtedly from below; and her name distinctly uttered in that same familiarly strange tone.

"There has been a horrible blunder, Garnett. I shiver with sick dread when I think, that *for nothing*, you have irrevocably joined your fate and Edna Silvester's."

Her husband's voice made answer quickly, eagerly.

"What do you mean, aunt Ella? Do you call the dower of fifty thousand dollars she brings me 'nothing'?"

"But, it is a fearful mistake, Garnett. I never knew till too late—not ten minutes ago—that the money reverts to Mr. Saxton in case of Edna's marriage. Fool, dolt that I was not to be suitably informed on that one all-important point, when all minor matters have been so felicitously arranged, even to the forging of the letter of introduction from Mr. Saxton."

An inarticulate sound that resembled mingled rage and disappointment, came from Garnett's lips.

"How did you find this edifying news out, at the eleventh hour? Do you *know* it to be so?"

"I can show you a copy of Mrs. Grandon Saxton's will—the first Mrs. Saxton, of course. She left large properties in various places, and a number of bequests and legacies; Edna had fifty thousand for her share so long as she remained single. I suppose the condition arose from the fact that as Mrs. Saxton was not happy in her marriage relations, she feared her adopted daughter would hardly be. Hence the attempt to keep her a spinster."

"And you swear you never knew of this curious condition until too late to save me from a fate it alone reconciled me to?"

"I swear it, and I'll prove it. Yesterday I telegraphed to my lawyer, M'Cowan, for a copy of the will, intending, so soon as Edna was your wife, to prove her identity, and enter into negotiations to have the money—even more than fifty thousand, since interest has been adding for eighteen years—paid to you, as her lawful representative. Then, and only then, I learned the true state of affairs, when the document came, to-night, when I knew the ceremony was already said."

Garnett walked rapidly up and down the room, several seconds, while an ominous silence reigned.

"So it seems the promise you made to the present Mrs. Saxton, that you would dispose of her predecessor's adopted foundling, will be null and void."

He spoke in tones of biting scorn.

"Edna Silvester is no more, Garnett. Mrs. Garnett Fay is another personage altogether. Money or no money, I have kept *my* part of the contract."

"Yes, you have, beautifully! It is a pity you did not literally follow Mrs. Saxton's directions and 'dispose' of her something as the first Mrs. S. was—"

"Garnett! remember walls have ears. Besides, now is not the time to bewail what has been stupidly and unfortunately done; it is the moment for decisive action as to the future. I, of course, shall drop my pretty mask yclept 'Aunt Ella Fay,' and return to New York in the somber attire usually worn by Rachelle Hunt."

"And I, I presume, must endure the honeymoon with my charming bride! By Jupiter, what an ass I have made of myself!"

"Edna is a lady, Garnett, if she does not know it, and the fortune she has would carry her anywhere; only, you see, Mrs. Saxton intends to appropriate it, through her husband, for Lenore, now that she will believe Edna is dead."

"I wish to heaven she *was* dead!" he retorted fiercely. "The idea of my being tied to *her*, when I could have barely endured her for the money's sake!"

Evidently his good thoughts had fled before his disappointment, and he and Rachelle sunk into moody silence.

While up-stairs, where, through the ventilating apparatus covered over with only the Brussels drugget, Edna heard every word!

At first a wild bewilderment had seized her, that began with the sound of Rachelle Hunt's voice; then a deadly pain in head and heart—a sickening, shivering despair, mortification, righteous wrath—held every power and faculty, every nerve, in a tense, straining grasp.

She heard of her fortune for the first time; she learned how Mrs. Saxton wanted her dead; she learned the suspicious suggestion of her dear dead adopted mother's murder; she found what a fearful chasm of bottomless mire she had stepped in. *He* hated her, despised her, recoiled from her because she was poor; *he*—and the name seemed scorched in letters of molten fire on her brain—*he was her husband!*

But never—never would he have it in his power to taunt her with it; never would she be more to him than she was at that moment. She would fly from him in utter horror, contempt, shame.

With trembling fingers she pinned her shawl around her and tied the bridelike scarf around her head. With softest footfall she glided down the stairway, and past the parlor door where she heard his footsteps as he paced angrily to and fro in the long room. She opened the hall door and stepped out in the eerie night, where the wild east wind was blowing, and the heavy clouds went scudding weirdly over the setting moon.

Out on the frozen ground, in the bitter cold—and where should she go?

Not again to Mt. Eden. She thought of the note lying on the toilet-stand, and a hot flush of crimson shame rose on her face, from forehead to chin.

Past the rustic gate she walked as fast as her



feet would carry her; down the narrow road toward the little village station. She knew the train for New York was due in a few minutes; she knew, once in the great city, she was at home and comparatively safe.

There was no one in the dimly-lighted little room, save the ticket-agent nodding behind his window; so Edna sat down and counted her money. She was a prudent girl, and as Mr. Saxton, in addition to an excellent wardrobe, had added a handful of bills, as a sort of salve to his twinging conscience, Edna found she had plenty to last her until she could form her plans for the future. Now, her one object was to get away from Sunset View; away from her husband, who, she knew and realized with a shiver of terror, could claim her anywhere if he so chose. And suppose, after all, the money—and Edna had grave doubts of this—could be inherited as well married as single, and he should want her again?

The firm way she compressed her lips, the flash of her quiet eyes, the flush on her face, betokened her new-born aversion to him who had caused the sudden change in her sentiments. She hated him with the strongest feeling she ever had experienced; and by the quick choking way her heart beat, and the way she started at every sound, she knew she feared him and the power he could undoubtedly exert over her.

If he missed her before the train came! oh, would it ever come? and then, just as she began despairing lest he would go up-stairs and find her flown, and, so naturally, seek her at the depot, the train came thundering by.

She would not buy a ticket at the office; she dreaded lest the agent might remember her, while now he had not even seen her. She preferred to pay double fare to the conductor, and, with her money in her hand, to a cent, so there need be no parleying about change and thereby draw momentary attention to her, Edna sprang into the car, and walked down the aisle to a gloomy half-seat, occupied by a big burly woman.

Edna had just cowered down between the window and the woman's shadow, when the car door opened, and in the flickering ray of light from the solitary kerosene burner that hung near the door, Edna recognized—Garnett Fay!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DOOM OF A NIGHT.

"WELL, what are you going to do? You promised Mrs. Fay you would call for her in a few minutes to escort her down-stairs. She is waiting, doubtless, impatiently."

Mrs. Fay—we will drop the mask, and call her by her name—Rachelle Hunt, fixed her bright eyes on her nephew's face, so white with conflicting emotions, and so set and stern under the new developments that had occurred.

He scowled at the title his aunt had given Edna. Yet, how could he gainsay it? She was his wife, and no power short of Death or a Divorce Court—twin black angels—could undo it.

Yes, Mrs. Fay was waiting, and, no doubt, impatient of his delay; while he, what exquisite meditations were his!

"You want to know what I am going to do? Listen, and I'll tell you, and then I am going to introduce my bride to you. I am going to leave her here at Sunset View, and I am going to pursue the same course I should have done if I never had seen her."

"And will you tell me what course that is?"

"Certainly," and Garnett smiled grimly. "For one thing, I am going to see my little 'Jessica.' If I like her, why—"

Rachelle frowned, and was about to answer, when he prevented by further words.

"There's no need of you manifesting any holy horror, *ma tante*; you have got me into a scrape, and I am going to get out of it the best I can. You sent for me from Philadelphia to aid you in 'disposing' of Edna Silvester, which for the little consideration of her fortune, I gladly undertook. Now that she is disposed of by merging her into Edna Fay, and thus strictly keeping the letter of the law with your ogre mistress—although mighty different from the way she meant—you very coolly ask me, after getting me in trouble, how I am going to get out of it? then, on hearing my method, which is far less reprehensible than *your* way of inveigling me, you seem petrified with horror."

Garnett's self-assurance was returning with every word he spoke; he seated himself, and leaned lazily back in the cushioned chair.

"But, to desert Edna! she is so refined, so dainty, so proud—it will kill her."

"So much the better," he returned, coolly. "It'll save the expense of the lawyer's bill."

"But how can you be divorced? what possible ground can you take? Besides, Garnett, surely she is the same as before you found she was penniless."

"Which makes a vast difference," he said, lightly. "Well, I'll go up, I guess."

Carelessly, slowly, Garnett ascended the stairs. He went along the corridor, and tapped lightly on the door of the room where he had left her.

Hearing no noise, and receiving no answer, he pushed the door slightly ajar, and entered the lighted apartment.

The low chair stood unoccupied by the fireplace; on the mantel lay several flowers, selected from among those in the crystal vases, but Edna was not there.

Thinking she probably had stepped into one or the other of the remaining rooms, he called her name.

No answer following, he stepped hastily through—to find them empty.

He paused, in utter amazement. Edna flown—why? where?

Then he sat down in the little rocking-chair she had so lately occupied, to unravel this new, singular mystery.

He knew she had not gone down-stairs; she would have come to the parlor had such been the case; then, what was he to make of it? and, with a sharp, queer pang, returned for a second the same sensation of unworthiness of her he had experienced in the carriage, opposite her pure, sweet face.

Of course, had she dreamed of what had transpired below, it would have been an all-sufficient excuse for her to take French leave. But she had not heard. How could she?

And at that identical moment there came from regions somewhere below, apparently from the floor between his very feet, a sentence that startled him, from the sharp distinctness with which it sounded.

It was only his aunt Rachelle giving a trifling command to the parlor maid; but the fact of his hearing it, up there, set Garnett's wits to work.

He tore up the Brussels rug; there lay, what he never had suspected the existence of, a small circular ventilator, that disclosed the fancy center piece on the ceiling below.

And thus, Edna had heard; consequently, naturally, had fled from him.

He was both relieved and chagrined. He was glad and mortified—the one, that the present difficulty of either plainly stating the case to her, or further acting a lie for her benefit, was so summarily dispensed with; the other, that Edna had received such an impression of him from his own testimony.

Not that he cared especially that it was Edna; had any woman heard him, it would have been the same, so great was his self-esteem.

She had gone—of that there was little doubt; and now that he came to think of it, of course she had returned to Mt. Eden. In fact, where else had she to go?

He unfolded the marriage-certificate from its new, fresh creases, read it over, and carefully placed it among his papers in his memorandum-book.

"There's no telling what may happen," he said, with a grim smile. "It may be worth diamonds some day, to me."

He turned down the light, and sauntered down-stairs to the parlor where Rachelle awaited.

"She's flitted, auntie. She heard every word that passed between us."

Rachelle's face turned a shade paler.

"No! And all my plans have come to nothing! What shall I tell Mrs. Saxton?"

She seemed to be talking to herself, as she walked to and fro before the fire, her silken train rustling softly, her bright, terrible eyes flashing fitfully.

Garnett watched her a moment, keenly, then went to the hat-rack in the hall, and donned overcoat and fur cap.

"Choose your own way, my astute auntie. I am going to catch the train, if I can, and off to the city. Shall I say good-by? You'll not see me in a hurry."

"Yes, good-by."

Rachelle spoke mechanically, hurriedly; she was thinking of other things.

He walked, almost ran to the station.

"Choose my way? Then, before I will go back and tell Mrs. Saxton I have failed, I will trail Edna Silvester and track her to the death!"

She walked slowly away from the window to the fire, then back to the window again.

"To-morrow I'll start. She's not at Mt. Eden, whatever Garnett thinks; but I'll begin there.

and go on, and on, till I find her. I verily believe I hate her, myself, when I think how she's vexed us all."

Poor Edna! no home or friends to fly to, and a pitiless avenger on her track!

Crouching, almost cowering in the dull gloom of the car, she watched, fascinated, the handsome blonde countenance of her husband, as he stood chatting to the conductor. Would he see her? was he after her? The thought was horror, yet, if he saw her, and chose to claim her, how could she help herself? She was *his* by law—his property—his possession.

The train was slowing up as it reached a way station, and as several passengers bustled in and out, it occurred to Edna to leave the cars here. True, she had paid her passage to New York, but the loss of the money was no consideration compared with the still horror she experienced in riding in the same car with him whom she despised so.

She slipped out between two men and reached the platform, crowded and jostled by eager, impatient travelers; she hurried into the warmth and light of the ladies' waiting-room, and heard the train move slowly, heavily on.

She drew a long breath of relief when the last car, with its red lanterns on the rear platform gleaming like two lurid eyes, disappeared in the distance; she entered the waiting-room again, and learned for the first time that the town in which she had stopped was a large one.

It mattered little to Edna; she was a stranger in a strange land, whose one hope was to cut the bonds that bound her to Garnett Fay. She sat quietly down to wait until the next train came which would carry her on to New York; sat down wearily in the now-deserted waiting-room, to plan and wonder what she had better do.

She wondered if she really was the heiress of fifty thousand dollars, with its accumulated compound interest. If so, how could she get it?

She remembered the name of the lawyer who had furnished Rachelle Hunt with a copy of the will; it was M'Gowan, and she stored it carefully on a shelf in Memory's hall for future use.

But, *ad interim*, should she seek employment as teacher, child's nurse, companion? what would be best suited to her? She felt there was no need of immediate action; only she did not intend to let her hoard of money dwindle too much before she began to replenish.

How weary and heart-sick she was as she sat there! How revengeful Destiny seemed to be to her, who always strove to do right?

Was this sore trial a judgment for her marrying a man for whom she had not entertained true, abiding affection?

A footstep at her side aroused her. She turned and met Oberdon Audrey's eyes!

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE STOLEN INTERVIEW.

THE carriage that bore Lenore Saxton through the crowded streets, threaded its way among the vehicles that filled the streets. Down Broadway to Courtlandt it went, in springy comfort, straight down to the gates, that, wide-opened, led to the ferry-house.

Lenore spoke to the coachman as they entered them.

"We will drive over to Jersey City, Mike. You can let the horses stand in Montgomery street at the depot. I want to see a friend a moment."

That ride over the river was an eventful though quiet one to the giddy girl, who leaned back among the chocolate cushions with the air of a queen. She was going to meet Vivian Ulmerstone, this stranger who had won her heart! Would his face follow up the impression his letters had made?

She was fairly trembling with nervousness when Mike opened the carriage-door for her to alight; but, she called all her pride to her aid, and, knowing she was looking her very best, and he must be an exacting lover who would not admire her, she walked across the space from the ferry entrance to the ladies' sitting-room.

Several ladies were there, and one little child was playing on the oilclothed floor. Lenore drew the rocking-chair near the large stove, and tried to be patient until the train should be in.

She had waited several minutes, and then, when there had come no train as yet, and when she was least expecting it, a gentleman came in, and walked up to her chair, extending his gloved hand, and raising his seal-skin cap.

"Miss Jessica, I am sure? Allow me to introduce myself—Mr. Ulmerstone."

A thrill of rapture passed over Lenore; she arose, threw back her veil, and saw the hand-



some face and elegant figure of her correspondent!

A flush of genuine pleasure surged over her face.

"And you are Vivian? I am so pleased to meet you."

He retained her hand a second, while he carefully scrutinized her piquant face.

"Shall we promenade the platform, Miss Jessica? I regret I only have a half-hour to spare, but I take the Washington Express at 9:15. You received my letter, I see."

"Oh, yes, and so surprised and glad. But I understood you were coming in to Jersey City by train. I was waiting for it when you came."

They were sauntering to and fro on the long platform, and Lenore was leaning on his arm, with a sensation of exquisite delight she had never known before.

"Did you not observe the date of my letter? I wrote it very hastily on the train, coming from up the river, down, and mailed it at a way-station."

He leaned his handsome head nearer to Lenore's flushed, brilliant face than was necessary for him to do in order that she might hear.

"Then you are going on to—where did you say?"

Lenore asked so innocently; and he smiled, because he instantly fathomed her. He had not said where he was going; but he told her now.

"To Philadelphia. How much pleasanter it would be if we were both going, instead of my enduring the long ride alone."

"I should be glad if it had happened that papa and I were traveling that way. We often do."

But the deepening glow on her cheek intimated how slightly undesirable "papa's" company would be.

"We must make the best of this precious half-hour, little friend," and he pressed lightly the tiny hand on his arm.

"You promised long ago to tell me all about your real name and residence, so that I may come and see you—and bend your dainty head lower, little Jessica, while I whisper if my addresses would be agreeable to you?"

"I would so like to have you come, Vivian—Madison avenue, number—"

The sudden escaping of steam near them drowned the number Lenore spoke. But, he caught the aristocratic locality, and smiled under his mustache.

"And your name?"

His voice was so sweet, so gentle, his eyes so full of that peculiar glow Lenore had fancied his eyes should wear. And yet a good angel warned her not to disclose her name.

"I would rather not tell you, indeed, Vivian. Wait, and I surely will some day; and then—"

Lenore laughed, and her cavalier saw a blush on her pretty face.

"You have a doubt about something, Jessica? If you want it relieved or verified, tell me."

"Well, I was going to say, how do I know you are not married? Are you, Vivian?"

Her foolish heart was beating at a rapid rate as she ventured the question. If he was, Lenore felt all the brightness of life was forever dimmed to her; if he was not, she might win him for her own. She knew she could, and she would.

A sharp glance shot from her eyes as she asked the question; then, a laugh he intended should be very mirthful but which, to less inexperienced ears than Lenore's, sounded forced and joyless.

"Married! what elf put such a notion in your head? If I was married, do you think, Jessica, I would dare trifle so with you?"

And Lenore believed him—this handsome stranger, who had sworn vows of sacred fidelity to Edna Silvester not twenty-four hours ago.

She believed him, because he looked so shocked at her suspicious query, because he answered her so readily, so gravely, so earnestly.

The interview was not prolonged further after this than mutually exchanged promises of further correspondence, and a readily-complied with invitation to meet again, this time in Central Park, at the Rink, when he returned from Philadelphia.

The Washington Express was fast filling with passengers, and Vivian only had time to whisper a parting word in her charmed ear.

"Little Jessica, good-by! I shall not soon forget to-night. Next time, when I come, I shall have something sweet to tell you."

He pressed her hand warmly, gave an ardent look in her all-too-conscious eyes, and left her.

Seated in the Pullman car, with his seal-skin cap pulled over his eyes, and comfortably fixed for a voyage, Vivian Ulmerstone, *alias* Garnett Fay, smiled, and thought:

"A little managing and I'll fix it. She's my style to a T. Madison avenue, hey?"

## CHAPTER XII.

### A WOMAN'S HEART AND A MAN'S HONOR.

MR. AUDREY'S first sensation upon coming so suddenly in Edna's presence, was genuine astonishment; his next, that depicted itself on every feature of his face, was keen delight.

"Edna Silvester! Is it possible? What kind fairy summoned you from Mt. Eden to meet me here?"

He had walked rapidly across the space that intervened between them, and extended his hand in warmest cordiality. His handsome face—Edna recognized with a nameless, agonized thrill of her heart how *very* fine it was—was all alight with a joyousness that proved, beyond cavil, how truly glad he was to see her.

Perhaps his face was a little paler than when Edna saw him last, or it might have been the flare of the lamp that made the pallor. No matter which it was, what business had Edna to note it with such solicitous care? What was Oberdon Audrey, the betrothed of Lenore Saxton to her, the wife of Garnett Fay?

A dreadful sinking at her heart, a dizziness in her head, a deathly trembling in her limbs—all answered the pitiful question; and the interpretation was she had discovered too late—oh, *too late*, who was the keeper of her affections; and every fiber of her being rebelled against her horrid bonds, as against her will, against her reason—but in such sweet accord with all her pure heart, she acknowledged this man her lord and master.

And he called her Edna Silvester! She was not Edna Silvester—she was Mrs. Fay; and for a second she felt like screaming at him, that, by so doing, she might relieve the awful pent-up misery in her soul.

She had not spoken a word, save necessitous inquiries, since she fled from her husband, almost from the altar railing. And now, when this dear, only friend was standing before her, holding her cold, shrinking hand in his own, whose close-clasping fingers were so full of exuberant vitality—this best, dearest friend, who was looking at her with eyes that somehow reminded her of a scene, not so long ago really, but that seemed ages back, counting the hours by their burden of misery; now, should she confide it all to him, from first to last?

What a fool she was to harbor such a suggestion! what did Oberdon Audrey care for her now, or for anybody, but Lenore Saxton, with her black eyes and scarlet lips?

And so, when, after a moment of uncertainty, while he held her hand so kindly, she spoke, it was with a low, weary voice she could not, for the life of her, help.

"It was no good fairy, I fear, Mr. Audrey. I am very tired, and, I fear, going to have one of my headaches."

She withdrew her hand, and leaned back again in the hard seat.

Oberdon had stared at her a second in consternation. She had called him "Mr. Audrey!" a name he had never before heard on her lips. Was she angry with him still for his presumption one evening, not so very long since?

He saw how excessively pale she was, and what a fire was glowing in her blue eyes; her hand, too, had been so clammy. And, *what* had brought her from Madame Flyaway's to that place at ten o'clock at night, and the wind rising, and a storm fast brewing?

"I hope you are not going to be ill, Edna," he answered, so gently, that she could hardly hold her lips from quivering. "I am glad I happened here so fortunately," he went on, seating himself beside her; "if you have any commission in which I could be of the least service, I beg you will command me."

She turned her head slightly away. How kind, how considerate he was, and she had, by her own dumb act, put all his kindness and consideration away from her forever.

No, he had helped forge the bars that divided them; Edna kept constantly forgetting, and ceaselessly remembering that he was bound to Lenore of his own free will.

"Thanks," she returned, quietly. "But I have no further business here than to wait for the train to New York. I am going to the city."

Edna spoke very quietly, very decidedly, yet she knew exactly how Oberdon would take it.

"To New York! to-night! alone!"

Then, all the astounded enthusiasm flying from his voice, he leaned quite close to her, and spoke in a low, confidential tone, whose persuasive command Edna felt in brain and heart.

"My dear Edna, what is it that is amiss? That something is, I see in every word, every look of yours. Tell me, and I will help you; you *know* you can trust me—who never can cease loving you so."

The words leaped on her ear like a hot avalanche. *He loved her so!* he—another woman's betrothed. She—another man's wife!

For a moment her blood rushed in mad frenzy through her veins. Her heart pulsed in a very delirium of joyful agony when his voice, his dear voice said those words; then—a horrid, blinding, deafening sense of her utter inability to listen came over her.

Surely, this intense ecstasy blended with such exquisite pain—surely, this was the sudden uprising of the water from their long-sealed fountain. *This* was love, at last, at last, too late!

Involuntarily, she turned her white, anguish-stricken face toward him.

"Oberdon! for Lenore's sake, don't talk so to me, please."

She put forth her hand, as if to thrust him away, but he would not be repulsed. He prisoned it and made her look at him.

"And what has Lenore to do with me, or you, Edna?"

"Aren't you engaged?"

Her lips formed the question of their own accord. It sounded as unexpectedly in her own ears as it did to Oberdon.

"Engaged!" he repeated, incredulously; then a brief, half-amused smile flitted over his face, and he leaned his head to Edna's mouth.

"I never was, and never will be engaged to any woman in the world until my one only darling takes me for her own. Will she?"

Edna's breath came in short, quick jerks. He was yet free to win her, and she—oh! Heaven, what had she done? Why, *why* had she not waited?

"Oh, Oberdon! Oberdon!"

She wailed forth his name in a piteous cry, whose burden he could not but know was love.

Wonderingly, yet with a sudden radiance of new-born hope lighting his face and eyes, he searched her face inquiringly.

"My Edna, my darling! I knew I was not to lose you!"

She was looking so strangely pale, so rigidly set in every feature that, in alarm, he grasped her arm.

"Come out on the platform, dearest! You will faint; the room is very warm and close."

She felt his strong, gentle hold of her; she knew the keen night air was blowing a refreshingly cold gale on her, and she realized, too, with a pang worse than death, that she had no right to be leaning against Oberdon Audrey—that she was Mrs. Garnett Fay.

She struggled up from his encircling arm that was so loth to let her go. But she broke from him; and then, urged by one wild resolve to tell it, and lessen the pain of the blow by its sharp quickness, she wheeled round so their faces might meet. His, overflowing with love, all radiant and glorified by the sudden sweet revelation that had come to him; hers, haggard and white, as if sore sickness had set a seal thereon; with wild, weird eyes, whose blue gleams were shot with lurid light.

"Oberdon—don't, for God's sake! I am a married woman!"

The voice was gasping; the words came quick, sharp; and then, with an inarticulate cry, as if stung by a dart, Oberdon receded a pace from her, echoing her words:

"A married woman!"

She bowed her head, in all its golden glory, as if to accept the torrent of reproach she knew she deserved at his lips.

But the reproach never came. He only stood quite still a moment, looking as with fascinated eyes on her proud, beautiful head. Then his answer came, low, quivering, agonized:

"May God help us both!"

For several minutes he seemed to forget her; and, wrapt so completely in the stunning bewilderment of his sorrow, Edna lifted her face and watched him battling with his murdered love. How wonderfully strange it was, this awakening from a sleep, that now proved not to have been a sleep at all—rather a nightmare, full of troublous visions! How hateful it was, that she, who with her woman's heart so yearned after companionship and appreciative love, should cast away the cup put to her lips for another which was so bitter; and then, when the first, resweetened, came to her thirsty mouth, she dare not drink!



How brave he was! how grand he was! and how her whole soul, despite its shackles, went out in one wild worship of him. To thus love; to be thus loved; to thus *know* she had a heart, as other people had, seemed for a moment worth the pain the knowledge brought. She was wandering away in a labyrinth of reveries when his voice recalled her.

"I want to ask you a question or so. Will you tell me, Edna, that you forgive me for offering you an affection you did not need?"

His voice was low, but it never faltered.

"I will not tell you any untruth. I did need—I do—oh—oh! Oberdon, if you *only* knew!"

Now, the tears once unstopped, she clung to his arm in a pleading passion of sorrow, whose violence shook her frame as the rough wind bends the delicate reed.

"Tell me, Edna. I am your best friend."

If he felt any heart-qualm, his even, kindly tone did not play the traitor.

And then, walking up and down the long, cold platform, with the shrill sough of the wind in their ears, and the wintry landscape, now dim and gloomy, now spectrally wan in the occasional glimpses of ghastly moonlight before their eyes, and with a chill, heavy despair in their hearts, Edna told him all, and Oberdon listened.

Then when she had finished, he paused in their weary promenade. They were at the extreme end of the platform, that looked afar into the open country, where they could see, a mile away, the scintillating gleam of the headlight on the approaching locomotive that would take Edna to her new life.

"I want you to tell me this—only this, Edna. I swear to you never to mention it again until the time comes when I can do so in honor; I ask you—once for all, Edna—do you love me?"

It was almost solemn, this appeal, direct to her inmost soul. There was no passion in his tones, or in his eyes; Edna read aright when she saw the proud intention of the man who would know, from principles of purest motive, if he had a right to work for this one he loved.

"I believe God will not misjudge me when I say, with all my heart, I do. But this must suffice forever."

She drew a long breath, as if the subject were done with, as she said, forever.

"Thank you, Edna. From this hour I shall be the best brother sister ever had. You shall tell me your plans, and I will help you, and Heaven will help us both, I know."

The train slowed up, disgorged its passengers, and took up Oberdon Audrey and Edna. He secured her a seat, and then was arranging his traveling blanket for himself, beside her, when her light touch fell on his overcoat sleeve.

"Please, Oberdon, go in the smoking-car; I wish you would."

Her pure eyes were very earnest in their pleading wistfulness.

"If you say so," he said, after a moment. "Only I wanted to hear where you were going when we reached New York."

She shook her head sadly, firmly.

He gathered up his luggage, smiled brightly, and started down the aisle.

"I'll see you on the ferry-boat."

She watched him through the door with a proud, pitiful smile; and then, when the darkness had hidden him, she drew down her head beside the window and let the hot tears drop unrestrainedly.

"It is best, it is for the best," she said, inly.

"It will be hard at first, and he may censure me, but I dare not risk it. I must fly from him as I did from another; not in utter horror, in intensest hate, but because—because I love him too well to stay."

The train sped on through the darkness, and when it thundered into Jersey city, Edna slipped out ere it had fairly stopped. And when Oberdon Audrey went looking through her car, through the whole train, then in the depot, and finally in hot haste, aboard the ferry-boat, which was just starting off, Edna Fay was riding up Pavonia avenue in the horse car that was to take her to a hotel, at the other end of the town, where she could stay until she positively made her new arrangements.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE NEW FACE BY THE FIRE.

LENORE met the coachman in the ticket office of the depot.

"Mike, are you warm? I am ready to go up to Jennie Slater's now, Nc. — Jersey avenue, near South Third, you remember."

Leaning back among the cushions, Lenore permitted herself to fall into a most delightful

reverie. At last she had seen Vivian Ulmerstone, and he had come up to her wildest expectations. He was handsome, refined; stylish and chivalrous; what else was there for her to desire? She never knew, nor gave a thought, to the possibility of his being an adventurer, beyond the one suggestive question she had so bluntly asked him, and so honestly believed. Even when he had asked her for her real name, and seemed to take it quite as a matter of fact that "Jessica" was an assumed one, it never occurred to her that his—"Vivian Ulmerstone"—was assumed as well, for the simple reason that he had told her, in one of his letters, that he had given her his true name at first. A gentleman had little to lose, in comparison with a lady, in such escapades as their correspondence, and while he admired and honored her for her ladylike delicacy in suppressing her true name, he would gladly acquaint her with his.

Thus it came to pass that she accepted and trusted his name; and of him and his name she sat and thought through the gayly-lighted avenue, as they drove up it, turning at length into the wide, aristocratic street where Jennie Slater lived.

Lenore made her call; marvelously short, considering the importance she attached to it in her parent's presence; and then, with the single word, "home," to patient Mike, lapsed back among the warm cushions, and never moved, scarcely, until the horses stopped in Madison avenue.

She descended, and would have gone straight to her room; but her mother met her as she passed the drawing-room door.

"Come in just as you are, Lenore. We have a guest, and I am especially anxious that he should see you at your best."

The implied compliment that she was looking so well, and the fact that Vivian had seen her as she looked then, helped to make Lenore accept the situation gracefully. Besides, she never lost an opportunity of making as indelible an impression as possible on the gentlemen generally.

She followed her mother in; all sparkle in her eyes, and her witching, gipsy face eloquent with beauty. With a glow of pardonable pride, Mrs. Saxton presented her.

"This is our daughter, Mr. Carlingford. You would hardly recognize her?"

Lenore bowed, and looked up to see a grandly-handsome gentleman regarding her with eyes wherein evident admiration was blended with sadness.

He bowed in a grave, courtly way, and then extended his hand cordially.

"Can it be possible little Lenore has grown so? The promise of her baby days has been more than fulfilled."

He looked from her beautiful face to Mrs. Saxton's, so like it in its maturer perfection.

"I can hardly realize that my oldest girl would have been a young lady like you, Miss Lenore. You remember my baby, Mrs. Saxton?"

His voice was just a little choked, and Lenore, with a curl of her upper lip, thought what a delightful topic for a drawing-room a dead baby was, who, from what Mr. Carlingford said, must have been dead almost as many years as she had been alive.

What had her mother meant when she whispered so enthusiastically and confidentially at the door of the drawing-room? Who or what was this undeniably elegant gentleman?

Lenore watched him as he conversed with Mrs. Saxton; and she thought to herself what a glory there was in his heavy gray hair, brushed over his forehead in a loose, graceful way, and off his temples, and then clustering in short waves around his finely-shaped head. His beard (a full suit he wore, mustache and heavy, long whiskers) was silver like his hair, and Lenore saw what proud gravity, mingled with tender firmness, was expressed by his mouth. His eyes were dark, expressive, thoughtful; his attire that of a well-to-do man.

Mrs. Saxton's pleasant, insinuating voice dispelled the mental inventory Lenore was taking.

"After you lay aside your wraps, my dear, I wish you to play for Mr. Carlingford. And then I am sure he will be so kind as to continue his charming narration of his life at his beautiful suburban residence."

Lenore quietly removed her hat and sacque, and rung to have them carried away. Then, in her inimitable way, so graceful, so thoroughly self-possessed, she sat down at the piano, and played, without further solicitation, a barcarolle from "Oberon."

Mr. Carlingford listened with keen, critical attention.

"I would like to hear that at home, Miss Lenore. To me, music must be enjoyed as every thing else is; and only at home do I really, thoroughly enjoy anything."

Lenore thought it would be exceedingly stupid to play for such a curious listener; and, bowing carelessly, began tumbling over a pile of operatic selections.

But a light kindled in Mrs. Saxton's eyes, that was reflected on her round cheek.

"Lenore would only be too happy to please her father's friend. My dear, are you in tune? I would like to hear this."

She had risen from her seat on the low French lounge, and rustled across the Moquet carpet to the music-stand, where, from a high heap, she selected one and laid it before Lenore.

It was "Dearest," and Lenore's especial aversion; nevertheless she sung it, and sung it well; and then vacated the piano-stool, and retired to the bay window, to scan Mr. Carlingford and think of Ulmerstone.

At nine o'clock the footman brought in coffee and lemonade, and some dainty Charlotte Russe, and while Mr. Saxton and Mr. Carlingford discussed their refreshments by the grate, Mrs. Saxton and Lenore conversed, in their low, cooing whisper.

"My dear child, since you positively have declared you would have nothing to do with Mr. Audrey—"

"You also mean since Mr. Oberdon Audrey has ceased his calls here, even after the rumor you set afloat of an engage—"

Lenore had playfully interrupted her mother; and now, quite sternly, Mrs. Saxton brought her sentence to a close.

"Since, I say, you refused to accept Mr. Audrey as a suitor, your father and I have been arranging another affair that promises a thousand fold better than the first. And you *must* be obedient, Lenore."

It was seldom Mrs. Saxton troubled herself to insist on any thing, and Lenore knew how very much in earnest she was, and how utterly foolhardy it would be in her to thwart, from the outset, the plans she guessed at with quick intuition.

So she nodded yes, and daintily sipped her lemonade while she listened.

"This Mr. Carlingford is very well off, owns a splendid place up the river—'Ellenwood,' he calls it—and is a widower. He has several times expressed a desire to see you, which leads your father and I to think you can manage it all your own way."

Mrs. Saxton, though speaking in her low, pleasant way, was scanning Lenore's face eagerly.

"Then, my dear mamma, my way will be a very short and easy one—to have nothing to do with him."

And delivering this presumptuous little opinion, Lenore lifted her black eyes half defiantly to her mother.

A little gasp of incredulous surprise from Mrs. Saxton preceded her prompt reply:

"What *can* you be thinking of? Did I not say, if Mr. Carlingford honored you with an offer of marriage, you *must* accept it?"

A something horribly suggestive of her own powerlessness in such hands as those fair ones that toyed with the icing on the cake, flashed across the girl's mind.

"You said he is a widower—he has children?"

It was her consummate tact that led her to instantly divert from the main subject.

"He has two little girls, two beautiful children. That would make no difference, Lenore."

Lenore laughed outright.

"Fancy me playing the devoted step-mother! Oh, mamma!"

Mrs. Saxton looked annoyed.

"You could do it, my dear. It would not be a quarter the trouble I had with Edna Silvester."

Lenore was thinking of the vast difference between becoming the wife of Mr. Carlingford, or Vivian Ulmerstone; she hardly could have heard Mrs. Saxton's remark, for she asked a question quite foreign from it.

"What is there about a child of Mr. Carlingford's that is dead that still affects him so? You were talking about it just after I came in."

Mrs. Saxton glanced across the spacious room and saw that her husband and guest were deeply engaged in discussing the condition of affairs in Wall street.

"It was his oldest; it didn't die, it was lost when it was only a baby. Mr. Carlingford says it had just learned to walk, and must have toddled out of the yard, and wandered away. They never heard of her afterward, though a small fortune was spent, and no stone left un-



turned. Of course, it was a worse blow than death; it threw Mrs. Carlingford into a decline, that ended, when her twin daughters were born, in her death."

"Mr. Carlingford is unfortunate," rejoined Lenore, lightly; "but it offers no excuse for his boring us with his affairs."

She walked over to the speaking-tube and summoned a servant to remove the remains of the refreshments, so that Mrs. Saxton had no opportunity to offer the demur on the end of her tongue.

For half an hour, perhaps, Lenore remained in the room, laughing and chatting with Mr. Carlingford, and recognized—with a thrill of proud elation, that was so natural to her—that her bright eyes and witching ways were insinuating him, as they had captivated Vivian Ulmerstone before him.

Not that she cared for enslaving this elderly lover—for he was rapidly growing to be that beneath the charms of her beautiful face. Merely for the pleasurable excitement of the task, and the triumphant satisfaction it gave her to have demonstrated again and again the fact that she was irresistible.

That was all, but it was enough to set his nerves all a-tingle; and when he retired to the grand guest-chamber, an hour later, he could not sleep for thinking of Lenore Saxton's bright, dark face, with its haunting, dusky eyes.

And so unfolded a new leaf in the volume of their fate that was one day to terrify them all who read it.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A BAFFLED QUEST.

As the train that had conveyed Edna Silvester—we shall call her so still, despite the Fate that had changed it—and Oberdon Audrey to Jersey City crawled slowly into the depot, it was Mr. Audrey's first duty as well as delight to gather his luggage hastily in his hands and make his way from the smoking-car to the ladies' car, where he had seen Edna comfortably ensconced.

He had arisen from his seat a little in advance of any other passenger, and was well out of the car before the aisle was jammed; but in the second car, through which he hoped to pass as easily, he found himself wedged in, and compelled to make his exit as slowly as the others.

He did not mind on any other account than his impatience to get to Edna; and when, after several minutes, he succeeded in reaching the third car he found it, too, had disgorged its passengers, and among them Edna.

He felt somewhat astonished that she had not waited for him; then he experienced a sensation of chagrin that he had not been more prompt; and, actuated by these combined motives he hurried out upon the platform to overtake her among the crowd hastening, as if every individual life depended on it, to the ferry.

He could not discern her among the throng, and he knew how soon he could have told her by her queenly, rapid walk, even if she had not worn so odd an attire—a scarlet and a white blanket shawl, and a white cloud over her head.

He began to feel uneasy. How could he have missed her so awkwardly? of course she was on the ferry-boat, by this time; three-quarters of the train was already aboard; so he dashed down his little green ticket, rushed through the narrow entrance to the big barn that led to the slip, and into the ladies' cabin of the "Hudson City."

He scanned every face as he walked more leisurely through the aft saloon; then, not seeing her, and becoming more anxious with each moment, he quickened his pace, resolved, if she were not somewhere forward, that he would retrace his steps.

He looked down the row of faces, on either side, every one of which was turned toward the handsome young fellow; he still did not see her, and he was beginning to grow positively sick with a vague fear, when the bright glow of a scarlet shawl on the forward deck caught his eye, just as some gentlemen passed through the swinging doors.

His face lighted up; he felt such a horrid load lifted from his heart, and he pressed through the group of men inside the doors, and toward the bright beacon of his hopes.

A pace separated him from the lady, when she turned suddenly to avoid a keen, sharp blast, as well as to speak to her escort.

And then Mr. Audrey saw it was not Edna.

A dumb distress chilled him through and through. He could not go back, for the boat was yards from the dock, and going fast he knew by the "thrill" of the engine.

##### Where was she?

He asked the question again and again, and answered it as often and differently every time. He concluded she must have been left in Jersey City, probably while waiting for him. In the ladies' room, doubtless. He reproached himself bitterly for not having looked in there, as he passed so near the door; and by the time the boat had landed her passengers at Courtlandt street, he had determined to return on her, and certainly apologize to Edna for his stupidity.

It seemed an age before the "Hudson City" was off again, and in reality it had been an hour and was now midnight. The lights burned ghostly as they swayed to and fro; there were only a few passengers on that trip, all men, and not a dozen of them.

Mr. Audrey looked at his watch several times crossing the river. It was such an uncanny hour for Edna, all alone, to be waiting for him, but he consoled himself with the thought that she was a brave, ladylike girl, who stood too entirely on her dignity to suffer ill.

He sprang impatiently over the chain, and on the dock before the boat bumped; he almost ran across the lonely, dimly-lighted space, and into the inclosure, and then into the ladies' room.

To his utter consternation it was vacant.

Then, and only then, it rushed across his mind that Edna had purposely fled with her quixotic notions of what was proper.

At the first realization of this fact, Oberdon was inclined to resent Edna's conduct; there, in the overflowing tide of love and compassion that surged over his heart, he sunk down in one of the leather-cushioned seats, completely smitten by this unexpected blow.

For perhaps twenty minutes he sat there thinking over, as calmly as he could, the marvelous chain of events in which he had been prisoned that night since the sun went down.

He was very heart-sick over Edna, lost, then found, and as suddenly lost again. And yet, why should he grieve over another man's wife? Ah, the question was answered in the same breath with which it was asked; and the answer was that Edna was *not*, should *not* be the wife of Garnett Fay.

True, a moment's ceremony had given her the privilege of wearing his name, and him the right to claim her before and in defiance of the whole world. But—if once he should set his eyes on this villain; if once he was within arm's length—!

He never could forget the name, as melodious as the owner was vicious. It was not a common name; "Garnett Fay," it was burned on his memory until the day of reckoning.

He arose from his lonely seat slowly, as a man does who is worn from fatigue; he wearily reentered the ferry-boat and returned to New York.

He had decided to begin his quest for Edna when the dawn broke. His first step would be to the Saxton mansion, to learn if there could be, by any strange chance, news of her; and, at all events, he would acquaint the family with her unhappy misfortune.

He stopped at the first hotel he found, the "Merchants," and ordered a room, and fire; and then, when the city clocks were tolling three, he laid down for a fitful, uneasy slumber till daylight.

At eight, he arose, and, after a careful toilette, had his breakfast, and then a smoke. By that time it was ten o'clock, and he ordered a coupe, and was driven to Madison avenue.

The morning was clear, and fearfully cold, and as he rode along, in the fresh, bracing air, he felt encouraged and even gay.

Of course he could find Edna; it was only a matter of time, and not a fortnight at furthest. All he need do, if the Saxtons had no information to offer, was to get a good private detective on her track.

Then, while one-half of the business was going nicely on, Oberdon thought that he himself would attend to severing by a divorce the bonds that bound her to a villain. And another task he must assume; he would find out about that money. To say the least, it was a most singular will, and if there was law and justice in New York, Edna should have her rights.

Altogether Oberdon was very hopeful and quite enthusiastic in the joyous winter sunlight, and the only thing that marred his buoyancy was the trifling thought that, in all probability, it would be days before he could see Edna again.

He was impatient; all lovers are impatient under ordinary circumstances, and, considering the state of affairs that then existed, it was the most natural thing in the world that this impatience

should be the only actual cloud that marred the horizon.

Of course, Oberdon wondered where she was, with all the pain curiosity is capable of; but, co-equal with wonderment, was the positive knowledge that she was perfectly competent to take care of herself.

He was in a glow of excitement as the coupe drew up beside the marble carriage-mount.

"You may wait," he said to the coachman; and then went up the high flight of brown steps, and rung the silver gong.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### A GIRL'S RESOLVES.

THANKS to a very slight acquaintance with the proprietor, Edna Silvester had no difficulty in procuring a room with light and fire at the American House, in Jersey City, despite the rather strange hour—it then was almost midnight—at which she applied.

Once safely locked within her room, she turned down the gas, and, drawing aside the maroon-colored curtains, sat down beside the window in the brilliant moonlight that flooded the tall houses and dingy sidewalks of Montgomery street with actual beauty. But the fairness of the night was lost, to an extent, upon Edna; her exciting series of adventure since she ate her tea in the refectory of Mt. Eden had so thoroughly stricken her, first with intensest pain and horror, then with a great, though momentary, ecstasy, that, between the two sensations, she hardly knew how to compose herself sufficiently to sit quietly down.

In the train, the swift, jarring motion was in such perfect unison with her nerves, that she calmly endured the ride; but now, when all Nature was so peaceful, so unnaturally quiet after the storm of wind that had raged in the early evening, that for the moment, under the relaxative condition of both mind and body, Edna was strangely, fancifully restless.

To sleep was simply impossible, tempting as the low bed, with its marseilles counterpane and square linen pillows looked; and though her head was aching in a dull, distressful way, Edna knew it would be better to obtain what rest she could in the low, cushioned arm-chair she had drawn to the window. So she removed her dress, and undid her hair, and then, wrapping her shawl about her bare shoulders, cuddled herself in the most comfortable position.

On the morrow, she must literally begin her new life; and already she had concluded to examine into the situations offered in the *Herald*, the ensuing morning; and as that was the first step decided on, and on the issue of which she was obliged to wait before she could tell what else to do, she dismissed the subject from her mind.

Then, there were all her clothes at Mt. Eden; and poor Edna's cheeks flamed as she remembered the little note left on her dressing-stand. What tantalizing demon had impelled her to thus flaunt her misfortune in the eyes of the whole world?

But, it was done, irrevocably. She could not recall it. Mme. Flyaway knew, ere this, that she was the wife of Garnett Fay, the niece-in-law of Mrs. Saxton's servant! And Edna smiled involuntarily to think how Rachele Hunt would resent such a title.

She must have her clothes, and she saw no way to get them but to telegraph for them to be sent—where?

If she waited until she entered on her new duties, it was obvious that her whereabouts would not remain a secret, as she fully intended. No one—not even Oberdon Audrey—should know where she was; her fate was to hide from her fate; to fly from her lover, because she loved him, to fly from her husband, because she despised him.

It was hard on poor Oberdon, and it was hard on Edna, that it must be so; but if it had been a pang severe enough to have sundered soul and body, Edna Silvester would have borne that pang, because it was duty; and we have seen how sternly conscientious she always aimed to be.

Therefore, she must not wait to have her trunks sent to her new locality. Better to have them sent at once, to the hotel, where no remark would be passed, and from which place she would have them conveyed at her pleasure.

On the morrow, then—at the hour when Mme. Flyaway would be about calling, in reproof and congratulations, on the bride of her neighbor—Edna's telegram would be received. What madame would think, or say, Edna did not permit herself to imagine. It would make no difference, and Edna wanted her trunks.

So she arranged the second matter under con-



sideration; the only remaining one to decide was, should she, or should she not, go home before she left the vicinity?

If she went, what good could come of her visit? She knew Madame Flyaway would not fail to inform the Saxtons; no one could know whether she were single, married, or dead; she supposed, from what she overheard at "Sunset View," that the fact of her forfeiting her fortune—supposing there was any to forfeit, which she was inclined to think must be true, on account of the trouble Garnett had taken to marry her, and the chagrin he manifested at learning his blunder, as well as the fact that if any one knew, it would be Rachelle Hunt, who nursed her adopted mother on her dying bed; granting that the money had been hers, and was legally lost by her marriage—bitter mockery though it was—Edna knew Mrs. Saxton well enough to be confident that lady would secretly rejoice at the fact, and regard it as the next best thing—after the runaway "disposal" she had commissioned Rachelle Hunt to accomplish—that could happen. By this marriage, Mrs. Saxton was directly benefited, though that was the last incentive to Rachelle Hunt when she accepted her mission; by it, she secured the money for Lenore, through Mr. Saxton, and at the same time removed forever out of Lenore's way a very probable rival.

Mrs. Saxton, both from policy and motives that were perfectly natural and correct, would acknowledge the marriage. Just as naturally she would politely inform Edna she would not, of course, regard the mansion on Madison avenue as her home any longer; and that she must, of course, look to her husband for future support.

And all the world would maintain Mrs. Saxton's opinion.

If Edna asked about the money, Mrs. Saxton, now that affairs were unalterable, would tell her it was true she had been heiress to the fifty thousand dollars, and that it was always intended for a pleasant surprise on Edna's twenty-first birthday; that it was expected that Edna, as a dutiful young girl, would have notified them of any engagement of marriage, and then been warned of what she would lose; but now, as the deed was done, the die cast—Edna could see Mrs. Saxton in imagination, and knew the line of defense she would take.

So then, since Edna knew she would leave the house no better than she had entered it, she decided, after very little meditation, to stay away from it. She had made up her mind to visit Lawyer McCowan's office before she left New York; he would know at once, probably, the nature of her affairs.

And thus Edna systematically disposed of her stumbling blocks, the best she could, with no one to guide her but Him to whom she more than once lifted her heart in entreaty for light through the darkness, for strength to bear the heavy burden laid on her young life. And the light was given her; and the strength to endure, and endure bravely.

Her long train of thought had made her more calm and quiet; now, when all need of mental effort was over, a pleasant restfulness stole over her; her sad, brave eyes closed, and a slumber, sweet as a baby's on its mother's arm, sealed them until the sunshine, brilliant as liquid gold, bathed her into a refreshed wakefulness again.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A WOMAN'S TRIUMPH.

As Mr. Audrey anticipated, both Mr. and Mrs. Saxton were at home when he handed his card to the footman, and was shown into the warm, sunshiny morning room, where Lenore and her mother, in faultless breakfast wrappers, sat with some pretty, trifling work in their hands.

They greeted him warmly, and Mrs. Saxton cordially insisted upon his removing his overcoat, and remaining to lunch.

"Mr. Saxton will be delighted to see you; and we have a friend with us, whom I am sure you would be pleased to know. He is in the library with Mr. Saxton now. Mr. Carlingford of Ellenwood."

Oberdon bowed; he felt bound to listen to Mrs. Saxton's light gossip talk, although he was impatient to introduce his own subject.

"He had not the honor of knowing Mr. Carlingford, of Ellenwood," he assured Mrs. Saxton, politely, adding that "he would be happy, at any future time, to make his acquaintance. This morning he begged an hour's indulgence of Mrs. Saxton. He had something particularly important to speak of."

Lenore laughed prettily.

"Then, mamma, I suppose I must beg to be excused since Mr. Audrey desires a private interview."

She gathered up her work, and bowed to Oberdon; but he hastily restrained her.

"You will be as interested as any one, Miss Lenore. You, as well as your mother, will be astonished to learn that—Edna is married."

He gave his information in a tone of voice that did not betray to the two listeners a tithe of what he felt; and he, in turn, was surprised to see the way in which his news was received.

"Oh!" said Lenore, as she languidly let herself sink into her chair, and then glanced at her mother.

Mrs. Saxton's lip curled.

"So I learned, ten minutes ago. Madame Flyaway has sent Mr. Saxton a telegram announcing the marriage of Miss Edna Silvester and Mr. Garnett Fay. I assure you I had nothing whatever to do with it."

She assumed her most frigid tone; and Audrey, nonplussed for the moment by the unexpected turn affairs had taken, only wondered if she thought he accused her of complicity.

"It was very sudden; I was terribly astonished; I thought, I hoped she might be here—"

He paused suddenly, wondering if it were prudent thus to divulge all facts; and then, from the curious glances of the eyes so closely searching his face, he realized he had gone so far in his remarks that some sort of explanation was certainly due.

And Mrs. Saxton helped him to make it.

"Mrs. Fay here? No, Mr. Audrey, when she so unfeelingly took advantage of us all, and married, without advice or consent, a stranger, a perfect stranger, she forfeited all right to this house forever. I am sorry, very sorry, that since you wished to see her so very much—"

There was a smiling scorn in Mrs. Saxton's fiery black eyes that did not altogether suit Mr. Audrey.

"You need not insinuate any thing, my dear madam. If you choose, you may say, outright, and with perfect truthfulness, that I am crushed to earth by this marriage of the only woman I ever loved, or ever can love; and when I tell you she has been entrapped by a villain, whose life were I to meet him, would not be worth a snap of my thumb and finger and from whom my poor Edna fled within fifteen minutes of the ceremony, perhaps you can imagine a hundredth part of what I feel."

If Oberdon had intended to produce a stupefying effect on the ladies by his first announcement, he was more than successful now. Lenore's sewing dropped from her hands, her shiny-bright eyes took in a perfect storm of astonishment. Mrs. Saxton was too deep to permit such unmistakable signs of her utter amazement, but Oberdon saw in her face plain tokens of it, and a gleam of malicious satisfaction as well. She was the first to break the silence; she did it in a cold, indifferent voice.

"Well, Edna can censure no one but herself."

And that was all the sympathy Edna ever received; and Oberdon resented the implied accusation, hotly.

"She can not censure herself, because she has not been to blame. She acted, as she has always done, from highest, purest motives; and the punishment should rest, and will one day rest, where it belongs, on Garnett Fay's head."

Oberdon was so thoroughly in earnest that his very enthusiasm but served to silence the two women; and in the silence that ensued, broken only by a soft rustle of the curtains that divided the apartment from the conservatory beyond, each thought their own thoughts. Lenore supremely indifferent to the entire affair; never knowing, never fearing the terrible complications the Furies were weaving for her.

How she would have shrunk and shivered had she seen the future—her future—spread before her as it was to be; and instead, she sat in the sunlight, dressed in her regal purple dress, and sewed, and smiled, and cared naught.

"So Edna was married, and the money secured, and the witching face forever removed from jealous, hating eyes. It was very good," Mrs. Saxton was saying that over and over, during that five minutes of silence; and her face, so proud, so beautiful to see, lighted with a radiance almost dazzling. Everything was fair sailing now. All at once, the sky had cleared of every cloud; and she felt relieved, actually delighted, that her and Rachelle Hunt's plans had been thwarted.

Rachelle was not returned yet from her unknown trip, and Mrs. Saxton was impatient to tell her news that would so astound her.

Yes, everything was good that Mrs. Saxton undertook to do—only, a white face and weak,

quivering voice would, despite the foreign thoughts, rise, somehow, every second before her eyes; and the question that, self-formed, had been whispering in her ears for years, would repeat, again and again: "Would she ever meet a retribution, for the crime she caused Rachelle Hunt to perform?"

So Mrs. Saxton's thoughts ran on in their peculiar groove, none suspecting them.

Oberdon sat gloomy and still. By some singularly sudden influence he had lost all the spirits with which he had started on his call an hour earlier; and the only reason he could or did assign was the chilling effect of Mrs. Saxton's and Lenore's demeanor.

A long silence reigned, in which the ladies seemed fully occupied with their own thoughts, and in which Oberdon felt he had nothing more to say.

He was about to make his adieu, and beg an excuse from lunch, when Mr. Saxton and Mr. Carlingford entered from the library.

Of course, salutations and an introduction followed, and the gentlemen naturally discussed the principal subject under present consideration—Edna's marriage.

Mr. Carlingford listened politely, offered occasional remarks, and appeared quite uninterested. In ten minutes he joined the ladies at the windows, where Lenore greeted him with her most winning smile. It was second nature to her to put forth every effort to attract gentlemen, and in this particular case she was succeeding admirably.

"I am glad you don't wish to discuss such a stupid subject. Now that Edna is married, what possible good or ill can come of talking about it?"

"That is very true, Miss Lenore, and yet, when you remember what a blow it is to Mr. Audrey, surely you can suffer him to complain."

Mr. Carlingford watched her face while she listened, and saw a swift shadow pass over it. Then she raised her eyes, full of softness and sweetness, to him.

"You are right, dear Mr. Carlingford, and I am very, very cruel. I think, I know, if I were in poor Oberdon's place, I should die with anguish. Mustn't it be terrible to have one's love crushed out so?"

She was thinking of Vivian Ulmerstone, and hence her dark eyes grew hazy with the depth of her affection for him, yet she cast such a fleeting glance at Mr. Carlingford's face that sent his noble heart beating faster than was its wont, that lighted his grand face with a proud, tender radiance.

Could it be possible she could care for him? she, this young, graceful, witching girl—be, with his gray hairs, and his fifty years? He was so humble in his estimate of himself, so utterly unconscious of his splendid attractiveness, that it filled him with awe and bliss to entertain the idea that Lenore might possibly learn to love him as he had already learned to worship her. Here, at least, would be a wife for him, if so be the Fates granted it, who would not marry him for his money, for she had plenty herself; it would be all for pure affection's sake, and on her side such wonderful condescension.

A little melodious laugh from Mrs. Saxton disturbed his delicious reverie.

"A penny, Mr. Carlingford, for your thoughts! I am sure they must be of Ellenwood, and the little girls. And that reminds me, have you sent to the office yet for answers to your advertisement? I presume all impecunious governesses for miles will respond."

"Surely, then, my chances of a selection will be good," he returned, gayly. "I shall not learn who wants to teach my little May and June until I return to Ellenwood. I had the letters directed there."

"What splendid fun it will be to read them, Mr. Carlingford! I envy you the task."

"I wish you would share it, Miss Lenore."

The challenge and its acceptance occurred so quickly that Lenore's exquisite blush and Mr. Carlingford's ardent language happened simultaneously; and then, with her wonderfully happy tact, Mrs. Saxton covered the confusion that delighted her so.

"We would be too happy to accept your very kind invitation to Ellenwood. I think I may safely promise you a week, in July coming."

Mr. Carlingford bowed.

"I shall bear it in mind; I shall be very much honored and I know Ellenwood will please you. Besides—" he turned to Lenore, "I am anxious for you to see my darlings, and pet them as I know you can do. They get so little womanly fondling."

"Your governess will see to that, Mr. Car-



lingford, doubtless. It is quite a godsend to a pretty young girl—the position at Ellenwood you offer, and the head of the house so very desirable.”

Mrs. Saxton laughed; she intended very pleasantly and properly to “sound” Mr. Carlingford, and when he became very grave all at once, she knew, with a delight she could hardly restrain, that there was little danger of any one's gaining an ascendancy over him while he believed Lenore was eligible.

His answer, so quietly expressed, so gentlemanly, strengthened her opinion, even if it slightly reproved her.

“I shall endeavor to secure a lady for my children's instructor, who would thoroughly respect my wife, when I take her to Ellenwood.”

And, while Mrs. Saxton swallowed, for her daughter's sake, the noxious rebuke, Mr. Carlingford looked at Lenore's sweet face, with its flushed cheeks, and downcast eyelids, whose silken lashes lay on the pearly cheek.

Just then Mr. Saxton and Oberdon arose, and despite their urgent invitation, Oberdon refused to remain to luncheon.

He bade them a courteous adieu, and left their presence with a bitter vow recorded in his heart that never again would he break bread with them until circumstances so changed that Edna Silvester was an equally honored guest. And, as he realized how wide a chasm divided the possible time from the miserable present, he smiled drearily.

A morning gone and no nearer Edna or Edna's interests than when he started forth; but, as he re-entered his coupe, he resolved never to give it up, and in a tone almost tyrannical he gave the order, “To —.”

It was the headquarters of a noted divorce lawyer.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### COVERING HIS RETREAT.

“VIVIAN ULMERSTONE,” or preferable, Mr. Garnett Fay, was enjoying a quiet smoke in his room at the Girard House, the evening after his personal interview with Lenore Saxton at the railroad depot.

He had arrived at Philadelphia near midnight, the night before, attended to some trifling business that awaited him, and then, toward evening, returned to his hotel to go to the theater or the billiard saloon, as his inclination led him.

But, to-night there was no evidence of his going out, clear and fair though the evening was. He had removed his boots and dress-coat, substituting slippers and a dressing-gown; he had lighted a cigar, and placed several others convenient; he had drawn the one gentleman's chair his room afforded in front of the table underneath the gas, and near the register; and thus fortified, commenced his evening's work.

The task was—to read the thick letter that lay unopened on the marble-topped table, and to decide upon the course he intended to take regarding not only Edna, his wife, but “Jessica,” his sweetheart.

He carefully slit the envelope with his pen-knife, and opened the daintily-perfumed sheet, settled his head comfortably against the cushioned back of his chair, crossed his legs, smoked his cigar, and read.

And this is the letter:

“MADISON AVENUE, Tuesday Night.

“MY DEAR NEPHEW:—You will be surprised, I know, when you see the date of my letter to be ‘home.’ I arrived since dinner, having left ‘Sunset View’ at noon. Why I write is to tell you, first, that I warn you to be cautious; your name has come to be a household word with the Saxtons, and the sooner you find and use another, the better it will be, not only for yourself, in case of unforeseen emergency, but on my account—if it ever comes to Mrs. Saxton's ears that you are the nephew she knows I have!

“So, my dear boy, I shall anxiously await the new christening you will be sure to give yourself; then, and only then you are free to go into the world again. Happily, no one knows your personal description but myself and Edna. Now, nephew mine, what shall you do about Edna? Supposing you do not know aught of her, I will tell you that, in all probability, she is hiding; how I know is, because on the night of her flight, she fatefully met on old lover—Oberdon Audrey by name—to whom, in her extremity, she confided all her troubles, and who, I gather from my informant—Mrs. S., of course—swears eternal fealty. (By the by, my dear boy, you would hugely enjoy hearing Mrs. S. rehearse the romantic story for my benefit; you would positively laugh to see her listen to and accept my account of my efforts to ‘dispose’ of Edna, and so kindly forgive my ineffectual attempts.)

“But to my story. It seems Mr. Audrey has lost sight of Edna—(she escaped him purposely, my word for it. Boy, what a jewel you have lost, money or no money!) and has started off hot foot, on a romantic quest for her, which will end (Mrs. S.

says) in a divorce followed by a wedding. As yet, however, she is wrapped in a perfect maze of mystery.

“So much for Edna. Regarding ‘Sunset View,’ Mrs. ‘Ella Fay’ has been obliged to start at once for England, and paid the landlord a quarter's rent to be released from the year's lease, he to sell the furniture that I fully intended as your bridal present, and retain half for his pains, the other half to be deposited in the Mt. Eden bank, subject to my order at any future time.

“So much, then, for ‘Sunset View,’ as well as Edna. Every tie is severed, even to Madame Fly-away, who came on the morning after the event, dressed in her robes of ceremony, to rebuke or congratulate as she perceived best. I wish you could have seen her when I coolly informed her the bridal pair had gone;—(I did not specify how, or when, or where, you may rest assured.) Did I say every tie was sundered? You can cut the last knot yourself by assuming another name, and destroying the certificate you have. Why should you not destroy the only evidence that binds you to one from whom it is advisable to be unloosed? Why should you not start anew, afresh, and make a place and a position for yourself as Smith, Jones or Brown! You have a business—a paying business, if only you will stick to it; take my advice, my boy, and start over again, and when you achieve success again, through my advice, instead of giving me the credit, remove the blame for what has been unfortunately done (as we thought for the best), from (for the last time),

“Your AUNT ‘ELLA.’”

Garnett read Rachelle Hunt's letter over the second time; only his smile of self-satisfaction noting his approval of the worldly wisdom she gave him, without stint.

It pleased him, every thing but one, in this letter; and that was, that Oberdon Audrey was in love with—his wife. It was a strange commixture of sensations, thoughts, views Garnett Fay experienced as he laid down the letter after he had thoroughly read and digested it.

First, granted Edna was his wife, what business had she and this Audrey with each other? He felt a pang of genuine jealousy shoot through his heart as he remembered Edna's sweetness, purity, womanliness—everything that a man ought to ask.

Then he curled his lip with scorn to think how he could compare her with “Jessica,” his bright, sparkling friend, who, unless he was mistaken, had sufficiency of wealth if he only could secure her—and it.

Of course he would destroy the certificate; and in a strong impulse of the freedom he would thereby obtain, he took it from his memorandum-book, tore it in pieces, and then held them in the gas-flame till they burned to ashes.

He smiled as he sat down again.

“A free man—after I've attended to the childish old minister, and bribed Jerry, the coachman, never to disclose the secret he had witnessed.”

He took a lead-pencil from his pocket, and wrote on the envelope of his aunt's letter the name Vivian Ulmerstone in his elegant handwriting.

“Why not?” he said, inwardly. “Why is not that as good a name as any my kind aunt suggests? Certainly more euphonious, if less brief. Garnett Fay, good-by forever! Mr. Vivian Ulmerstone, *entre!*”

He bowed to the handsome, triumphant face that smiled at him, with its brilliant, conscious blue eyes from the mirror of the dressing-case; and then, as calmly, as indifferently as if he had decided what coat to wear, resumed his smoking.

His cigar finished, he unlocked his portable desk, and, after several minutes' thought, dashed off a letter.

“GIRARD HOUSE, Friday Night.

“My astute auntie will be happy to learn she can command her dutiful nephew. The deed is done, or, rather undone; G. F. made his exit; advice all accepted and heartily thanked for by

“Most obedient VIVIAN ULMERSTONE.”

He laughed as he signed his name.

“A good thing my beauty at the depot did not make me admit mine was an assumed name—she'll be Mrs. U. of a verity if I can persuade her.”

He sealed and directed his envelope, and rung to have it mailed, at the same time ordering a brandy “straight.”

“I need a stiffener,” he thought, as he leaned lazily back among the buttoned cushions, until the man came with the tumbler of the liquor. He drank it, then undressed and went to bed.

Following out his programme, he went back to Sunset View, so disguised in his Spanish skin and jet-black hair and heavy whiskers that Edna herself would not have known him. He hunted for Jerry, the coachman who had been hired from the village tavern, prepared to silence him. But, when the mistress of the inn, with a courtesy, and a perceptible lengthening of the face, “hoped as the gentleman wasn't

one o' them ‘ristocratic Englishers poor Jerry declared was so fond of him, ‘cause it was very suddint, indeed, and the ‘pothecary said it was around a good deal, and hardly anybody got over it—leastwise, it took Jerry Carnachan off in less 'n a day, notwithstanding—”

It flashed over Vivian (we will follow his bent) like a lightning streak; for once, Destiny was favoring him—the one witness was dead!

He could have shouted for joy in his moment of unexpected triumph. Jerry dead! his hush-money a clear gain! and the main thought in his mind, next to gratitude for this cheaply-arranged escape in one direction, was, that he might learn that this disease, “that was around a good deal,” might find, if it had not found already, a victim in the decrepit old minister.

Such, however, was not the case, as Vivian found when he called at the parsonage to question the clergyman, whom he found walking with his cane in the winter sunshine.

In reply to his oily questions Vivian learned that old Mr. Robbins remembered the marriage without the shadow of a doubt; he remembered the handsome bridegroom, and the stately, reticent bride who had sighed when the words were said; and he had kept his own private copy of the marriage-certificate, signed by Jerry Carnachan.

Vivian asked to be allowed, as a great privilege, to see “his friend's” wedding-certificate; he could hardly believe it unless he saw it; he was astounded, astonished, wonder-stricken, to think Garnett was married; he *must* see for himself, ere he carried the news to his friends at home. What more natural than that?

Mr. Robbins would permit this gentleman to see his little book wherein he kept his private certificates? and what more easy to do, than, when Vivian, book in hand, open at the page that records the fact of his marriage with Edna Silvester, suddenly called the old man's attention to some passing object out of doors, talking volubly the while, with one sharp jerk, to remove the leaf and thrust it in his vest pocket?

Then he looked at the page opposite, when Mr. Robbins turned his head, shook his own as if he almost doubted the evidence of his own senses, and gently closed the book, and re-strapped it, holding it in his hand while he expressed his great obligation, and only laying it down when he said good-morning.

He insisted on accompanying Mr. Robbins to the sunny walk where he found him, and, paying him a last compliment and bidding a last adieu, rushed off in time, and not a second too soon, for the down train that carried him and his theft safely away from Sunset View.

Once in the smoking-car, he carelessly tore the precious paper into pieces, first assuring himself it was *the* one; then he thrust the fragments in the stove near his seat, and watched them burn.

He had done it—or undone it, which was it? It made no difference, so long as he had succeeded in what he undertook. He was free, free as the air, that blew in his hot face; his brain fairly whirled as he realized there was never more anything to prevent him from marrying money—Jessica if she had money, although her pretty face had bewitched him, regardless of money.

He resolved to follow this last opportunity, and see what it would lead to, and so he rode to New York, with the dye on his face only a little lighter than the dye in his heart, to wash off the one, to deepen the other.

At the city, he changed his identity with his clothes and his disguise. Vivian Ulmerstone wrote a note to “Jessica,” whom he proposed to marry, while, strangely paradoxical as it may seem, he kept wondering what business this Mr. Audrey had to care for Edna Silvester.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ANSWER TO AN ADVERTISEMENT.

It was nearly nine o'clock when Edna awoke from the sleep that greatly refreshed her, both bodily and mentally; she stirred the fire, opened one of the windows from the top to let in the pure, fresh morning air, and then leisurely began her toilette.

She arranged her hair without any ornament, except its own lustrous richness; she removed the lace frill and ruffles from throat and wrists of her gray dress, and took off the sash from the overskirt. Then, she rung for the chambermaid and gave her a dollar to buy her a plain linen collar and cuffs from a ladies' furnishing store near by.

While she waited for the necessary adjuncts to her toilette, she ordered breakfast in her room, and sat down beside the fire to go over in



her mind again the programme she had planned, several hours before.

"Yes, it was prudently arranged; she was content, after the test of sleeping on it, to adopt and carry out her self-proposed line of conduct. And first, she would read the *Herald*; without a moment's delay, she rung for it.

She took it almost eagerly from the boy's hand. Among all those columns of "Help wanted" was it possible no one wanted her help? Her hands fairly trembled as she opened the sheet and sought what she needed.

There were plenty of seamstresses wanted; and children's nurses, and lady's maids, and invalid's companions, but over all these Edna passed, looking for something nearer her wishes. Not that she would have scorned the humblest position, when once she realized none higher could be obtained; but her first effort should be for what she felt most congenial to her.

Her courage flagged just a little to find no advertisement suiting her among the three columns; and then, her eyes suddenly caught the last of them all.

It was a short, terse notice, asking for a resident governess, for two girls of seven; the salary was good—five hundred dollars; reference required, and the letter to be addressed to "Mr. Carlingford, Ellenwood-on-the-Hudson."

It was just what Edna wanted, exactly: "Ellenwood," she had never heard of it before, and if it was unknown to her, why not as well unknown to the two men from whom she must hide?

But—the references! Edna smiled bitterly at the idea of her having no references; she, who was so capable, morally and intellectually, to guide these two little girls.

But, references or no references she would not let the chance slip by; she would go, personally, and see this Mr. Carlingford, and he might—and Edna realized as well that he might *not*—give her the position.

This decided, Edna felt quite like eating the toast, and the coffee, the broiled chicken, the omelette and Guard jelly she had ordered.

Breakfast over, she found it was ten o'clock by her watch; she put on her linen set, and sent for an Appleton's Railway Guide by the chambermaid who had done her errand.

By the Guide, she learned the location of Ellenwood, and found it was an elegant private place, with a depot of its own; it was thirty miles up the river, and the next train would leave in an hour.

It gave her barely time to meet it, for she had one or two imperative errands to do; so she concluded it was advisable to hire a close carriage, both for the privacy and speed it would afford her.

Leaving word that she would want her room again that evening, Edna started off in the cab that awaited her, to perform her errands. The first was to the Western Union Telegraph office, in Exchange place, where she sent the message for her trunks to Madame Flyaway—giving her name with a trembling tongue, and after a moment's thought, as simply, "Edna, American House, Jersey City."

Mme. Flyaway might use her own discretion as to the surname; all Edna wanted of her was her luggage.

Then she drove to a millinery store on Newark avenue, where she bought a plain, becoming hat—a black velvet with a silver-gray wing, and a silver-gray tissue veil, that was far less conspicuous than the white cloud she had fled in. Then she purchased a waterproof cloak, with a round cape, and hard-lined with blue flannel, and a pair of gauntlets.

Thus attired, and very much altered in appearance, she re-entered the carriage, leaving her scarlet shawl and white nubia with the obliging shopwoman, until called for in the evening. By this time she had only time to be driven over the ferry and up to the Grand Central Depot, which she reached none too soon.

As the train whirled along through the sunshiny, wintry landscape, Edna began to grow nervous. What reason had she for supposing this Mr. Carlingford would hire her without a reference, save the honesty that shone in her face? It was a romantic goose-chase, if a goose-chase can be romantic; of course, there were dozens, scores of worthy young girls who could give most satisfactory evidences of capability, capacity, character.

And she—a married woman, going as a girl to seek this situation!

Edna's cheeks flamed, and her eyes filled with salty tears; it was hard, very hard; but she had a clear conscience, and she would not let such craven fearfulness thwart her when she was honestly attempting to honestly gain a living.

By the time the brakeman shouted "Ellenwood!" Edna's nervousness had flown; she was her own quiet, self-possessed self again, and she sprang lightly down the steps to the platform.

Of the passengers on the train she was the only one who alighted at Ellenwood. The little station was desolate, save for a lad of sixteen who was locking the door, and was about to hurry away until the next train, which was three or four hours distant.

Of him Edna inquired the way to Mr. Carlingford's, and the time the next train down stopped at Ellenwood.

He pointed to a large, imposing mansion, built of white marble, standing on a slight eminence that extended, in a succession of low terraces, to the river's edge.

Large trees, now leafless and weird-looking, surrounded the house on all sides; a broad graveled walk extended from the wide iron gates, that stood hospitably open, to the foot of the flight of griffin-guarded marble steps that led to the long, wide, columned piazza.

Wide-spreading grounds, laid out in lawns, groves, promenades; fountains, sealed by the icy breath of winter; choice floral treasures, prisoned in thick straw protectors; rustic arbors, covered with leafless vines; statuary standing cold and ghostly in the sunlight; little summer-houses, and a picturesque chapel, modeled like a Chinese mosque, all told Edna what a very paradise of beauty Ellenwood was in the summer-time.

At first she thought no one could be at home, so desolate and still it all lay under the wintry sky; then, like a sudden flash of warmth into bitter coldness, she saw the inside shutters of one of the windows of the second floor open, and between the brilliant crimson curtains there appeared a face and a warm-hued dress.

Of course, then, some one was home, and ladies; and so Edna started briskly up the footpath that led from the depot steps to the entrance to the Ellenwood grounds.

She was conscious of unceasing espionage from the face at the window; once she glanced that way, and saw, what she had not discerned at a distance, that the lady was very pretty, and as refined as fair. Edna at once concluded it was the mistress of Ellenwood; and, with the softening blue eyes impressed on her memory, hoped she would have the important interview with her rather than the advertiser.

She walked up the imposing flight of steps, and rung the silver bell, and then stepped inside the large, square vestibule, which was divided from the hall by double walnut doors, with stained glass panels.

In a second, a pompous man-servant, in plain, unmistakable livery, opened the door in answer to her summons.

"Can I see Mr. Carlingford? I have called upon business."

Her sweet, clear voice, her frank address, her lady-like presence, her thoroughly refined face was not without its effect upon the knowing footman.

He bowed, and showed her into a room on the left side of the immense hall.

Edna found herself in a small reception-room, very similar to the one at Madison avenue; it was deliciously warm, rather dimly lighted, and was slightly redolent of hot-house flowers. It was pleasant and seemed so natural to her that she hardly knew how long it was before she heard steps approaching.

She certainly supposed it was Mr. Carlingford; but the footman entered alone.

"Mr. Carlingford begs you will see him in the library."

Of course Edna acquiesced, and followed again through the hall, with its soft warmth, the pristine-hued light that came from daintily-stained windows, up the broad walnut stairs, covered with Persian velvet carpet, through a square corridor, where the foot sunk in the rich pile of the carpeting, and into a room in the center, and front of the house.

Edna saw at one glance that the library was not a whit less splendid than the other portions of Ellenwood. She saw a green carpet, like a sheet of moss, on the floor; shelves filled with books from floor to ceiling on every side, with deep French windows at short intervals dividing the shelves; she saw the dark gleam of bronzes, the white glitter of statuettes; she saw a long oval study table, with a student's lamp, littered with papers, and beside it, in a swinging green rep arm-chair—

"Mr. Carlingford, miss."

#### CHAPTER XIX.

#### TWO GLEAMS OF LIGHT.

Edna bowed, gravely, as the footman men-

tioned the gentleman's name. Mr. Carlingford rose, with the instinctive reverence a gentleman always pays to a lady.

"I am an applicant for the position of governess; I saw your advertisement, and came to offer my services."

Her voice was perfectly toned, and she threw aside her veil as she spoke. With a curious start, as he casually glanced at her, Mr. Carlingford stepped nearer her.

A little blush at his pointed consternation on beholding her brought an instantaneous apology.

"I sincerely beg your pardon. I was so—so—astonished, so shocked at a resemblance between you and a dear one that is dead. I may ask you to be seated; and your name, please?"

Edna gracefully seated herself in a chair near her. Her name? should it be her own, or, for safety's sake an assumed one? A second decided it.

"You may have my name, certainly. I am Miss Vandeleur."

He bowed, and Edna, with a thrill of delight, was glad she could so conscientiously accept the consent of her truthfulness that his courteous bow implied.

Her name was Vandeleur by just as good a right as Silvester, and surely more her rightful one than Fay. She had been christened Edna Vandeleur Silvester, by her adopted mother, who would not own her own name, Saxton, from some odd vagary; and Edna, never admiring the long, though musical title, had dropped the center one when she was yet a little girl.

Not a soul in the world knew her name was Vandeleur; what then more appropriate, more truthful than that she should unhesitatingly adopt it in her time of need?

Mr. Carlingford resumed his seat, still keeping his eyes, as if fascinated, on Edna's pure, pale face; yet their scrutiny was so grave, so respectful, and withal, so intense, that she could not feel insulted by it.

"Miss Vandeleur," he repeated, after a moment, "I expected to be applied to by letter, and I came down from New York last night for my anticipated mail. My advertisement has been in three successive days, and you see the result."

He smiled and pointed to the scores of opened letters scattered on the study table.

A little pang of despair shot through Edna's heart; and it mirrored itself on her face.

"There can be no chance for me then; and no one needs it more than I."

Her eyes were full of tears that she would not let fall; and Mr. Carlingford saw the tight, almost fierce clasp of her gloved fingers.

He was interested, deeply, in this beautiful girl, who seemed more anxious than his correspondents—for she had come personally—and who looked so like—yet unlike, as he saw her longer—some one "who was dead."

"Perhaps your chances are better, Miss Vandeleur. I think a personal interview is decidedly best, but I dreaded it. What would I have done had I been obliged to see the writers of all these?"

But Edna could not reflect the merry smile on his nobly chiseled face; she was thinking, bitterly, sadly, of the "references" there must be in all that mass of correspondence.

"A personal interview is best, Mr. Carlingford, and I came to Ellenwood because I knew, if I depended on a letter alone, my one hope was hopeless. I want the position—oh! Mr. Carlingford, you, in the midst of comfort, of shelter, of friends, at home, can not know how I want it. And I haven't a reference in the world, but I am honest, I am decent, I am a good scholar. Oh, sir, what will I do if I am refused, when I have not a friend, no parents, no home?"

Now, the tears stood on her long, thick lashes; and she half arose from her chair in her eager pleading for this haven of rest, this asylum of security. Her face was pale as death, and her eyes shone, even through the mist that clouded them, like the brightest stars.

Mr. Carlingford listened gravely; his hand trembled on the arm of the chair, and he watched the motion of her red lips, the involuntary bending of her queenly head, and remembered that once, years and years before, another, as fair, as sweet, as pure as he could have sworn this girl to be, had stood before him and begged a favor of him. It touched him, despite his stern silence.

"Miss Vandeleur, it would be a dangerous thing if I were to place my little motherless girls—"

She interrupted him with a sharp exclamation.

"Have they no mother? I thought I saw a lady when I came. No mother!"

A faint flush crept from her shapely throat to



her white temples. What construction could be placed on her ardent language? could Mr. Carlingford, for a moment—oh! *could* he, possibly, think she was interested because—because the children were motherless? And a quick, angry gleam came almost simultaneously with the blush.

It did not escape Mr. Carlingford's keen eyes; and, with a rare, delicate intuition, it was plain as daylight to him.

And the gleam of mortified anger, the blush of wounded delicacy, won the position of governor for Edna against the yards of references on the table!

"Miss Vandeleur," he said, in his pleasant, winning way, that was a strange mixture of sweetness and sternness, "you will allow me to speak very plainly to you? You are a child, compared with my fifty years, and a word from me can do no harm, surely. I see just what you are; a lady, whom Fate or Fortune has thrown into the crucible to make a more perfect creation of. I know you are suitable to guide and teach my little girls; they are your charges from this moment. And I also know, Miss Vandeleur, that you have a trouble, a secret trouble. Rest assured that never, until you have proven us to be friends to you, and you a friend to us, will we seek to know it; and then, I can promise sympathy at least."

He held out his hand, cordially; and Edna took it, silently, and with a dumb thankfulness she never forgot.

A second after, her voice, low and sweet, found utterance.

"I can only prove my obligations by my services. I will be faithful to the little ones' minds and bodies and souls, and because of my great, dreadful trouble, I shall the more appreciate your kindness."

Thus the mysterious hand of Destiny forged a new link in the chain that one day would bind in crushing fetters—who?

Mr. Carlingford walked over to the silver speaking-tube and said something in a low tone that escaped Edna. Then he turned around to her.

"I will take you to see my little girls, Miss Vandeleur, and introduce my sister. You will stay with us, I suppose, from now?"

"I must go back for my trunk and settle my hotel bill before I begin my duties here."

Somehow, Mr. Carlingford was loth to have her go.

"But one of my men can go for the luggage and do your business. It looks like a snow-storm; you had better remain."

They had gone across the large square corridor, hung with numerous oil portraits of the Carlingfords, for generations past, and Mr. Carlingford tapped lightly on a door that was ajar, and then, followed by Edna, entered.

It was the largest room she had seen yet at Ellenwood, with a floor of inlaid wood, polished brightly, and covered with gay druggets in various places.

A small piano occupied one alcove; a raised dais, three steps high, ran across the rear end, on which were a large desk, and an arm-chair. Two small desks and two tiny chairs were placed opposite the platform; on the walls were maps, pictures, and juvenile drawings. Crimson moreen curtains hung at the four windows, and Edna recognized, sitting beside the cheerily-blazing fire, the lady she had seen at the window.

Beside her, one on either knee, were two little girls, so exactly alike, yet so entirely different, that Edna involuntarily stopped in the center of the room. Mr. Carlingford smiled.

"You are not the first, Miss Vandeleur, who finds it difficult to reconcile the fact that blue eyes and yellow hair can so perfectly resemble brown eyes and brown hair. Annie, this is Miss Vandeleur, the new governess. Miss Vandeleur, my sister, Miss Carlingford."

Edna bowed, then glanced up at the graceful, delicate woman who had come toward her.

"My dear Miss Vandeleur, I am glad to know you. You will make yourself perfectly at home, I trust, with us. May, come here, darling; come, June, and see Miss Vandeleur. Won't you kiss her?"

Edna put out her hands to the beautiful children, who came to her unhesitatingly to be kissed. And Edna kissed them with a strange swelling at her heart.

As she released little blue-eyed May, she turned toward Miss Carlingford, and caught her eyes intently fixed on her, with almost as much questioning surprise as Mr. Carlingford had evinced.

Her pale face flushed, and Miss Carlingford, seeing her agitation, came bravely forward.

"I did not mean to embarrass you, Miss Vandeleur; but you are so very like—"

What she would have said Mr. Carlingford prevented.

"Ring for some one to show Miss Vandeleur her room. She will want to rest before luncheon."

Edna had only a second in which to decide before Miss Carlingford pulled the tassel at her elbow. Should she return for her trunks or not? would it not be best to settle her own business with the landlord? besides, she wanted her bundle she left at the store, and she wanted, too, to see Lawyer M'Cowan about that legacy, if possible.

She turned toward Miss Carlingford, just as that lady's hand touched the tassel.

"I will not trouble you. I would much rather return," she said to Mr. Carlingford, sweetly. "I have several little commissions to attend to, and to-morrow I will come to stay."

The answer, so quiet, was decisive; and Edna said her adieux, and descended to the entrance, accompanied by Mr. Carlingford.

"You will not disappoint us, child?" he said, almost pleadingly, at the door of the vestibule.

And Edna turned her bright, thankful eyes to him as she answered him:

"I would be disappointed far more than you possibly could be. Already, Ellenwood seems like home."

"And, so singularly, it seems to me we have always known you, Miss Vandeleur."

Edna's step was light and free as she returned to the little depot, where the boy was again, and where she felt so peculiarly at home. She bought her ticket, lowered her veil over her face, now flushed with the quick frosty walk, and entered the train when it stopped.

In less than an hour she arrived at 42d street and 4th avenue, where she hired a hack, and was driven direct to Lawyer M'Cowan's office.

She found it to be a dull, cheerless place, on the shady side of a dingy street; with ugly furniture, and two homely clerks, copying for dear life. Indeed the one and only bright spot was Mr. M'Cowan himself, whose twinkling green-blue eyes and jolly round face inspired Edna with confidence at a glance.

Without reserve, she told him her story—that is, all except her future intentions. She asked him regarding the legacy, and found to her intense amazement that the money was not forfeited in case of her marriage. Mr. M'Cowan had informed a Mrs. Fay to the contrary; he would inform any one as well, for such were the conditions of the will. Every one was to suppose Edna Silvester would lose her fortune by marrying, and then the man who married her would certainly be no fortune-hunter; she would thus secure a husband who would value her for herself.

Mr. M'Cowan had received orders, years and years ago, before the first Mrs. Saxton died, to never disclose the secret except to Edna herself, on her own inquiring; and here she was, led through strange ways, to unravel another thread in the web of Fate that was slowly closing around her.

"And you know me so well?" she remarked to the lawyer, as she was about departing.

"Ever since Mrs. Saxton brought you here from where she actually bought you of an old hag for a hundred dollars cash. The Saxtons lived in the country then."

Somehow, it seemed to Edna she had found a friend; and when she had arranged with him to still keep her fortune as he had for years, until she came to claim it, she went away, lighter of heart than she had been for days.

## CHAPTER XX.

### VIVIAN'S DISCOVERY.

ARRIVED at New York, and a note dispatched to "Jessica, Station D," Vivian Ulmerstone resigned himself patiently to await the end of the scheme he had fully arranged in his fertile brain.

He was not a very patient man; apt not only to rush at conclusions, but fully as given to hurrying to an accomplishment whatever project he had in view.

To him, obstacles offered no impediment in fact. The greater the hindrances the more he enjoyed combating them; and, what to most men would have been insuperable difficulties, Vivian Ulmerstone easily accomplished.

Such characteristics as Vivian Ulmerstone possessed, while they made a deplorably unprincipled man of him, could they have been trained and carried from their perverted uses, would have given their possessor high rank among men of skill, and large executive ability.

But Vivian Ulmerstone had covered up his back-tracks, and now, free-handed, free-footed, except for a queer little jealousy, that somehow kept rising in his memory, he swore to win the pretty, piquant girl, who, he knew, with his shrewd, keen insight into human nature, was only waiting to be asked to share his destiny.

Jessica was very pretty—very; he decided that languidly, as he rode up Broadway in a Madison avenue stage; she was stylish, educated, and belonged to the "upper ten," most assuredly. But *who* was she?

Then, even his calloused heart beat a little faster than was its wont, as he saw, glancing carelessly through the window, Jessica descending the brown-stone steps of an imposing residence, just as the stage rode by.

She did not see him, but he watched her closely. He saw her consult her tablets, that she held so daintily in her pear-kidded fingers; he saw her spring lightly into the little coupe, and be driven off; and he saw, too, on the silver door-plate, the name: "GRANDON SAXTON."

Then he pulled the check-strap, and was about to alight, when a sentence from one of his fellow-passengers caused him to change his mind very suddenly.

"You saw Miss Saxton, Carroll? What a pretty girl she is."

"And as rich, or will be, when the old man dies, as she is pretty."

"She'll not inherit it all, will she? I think I heard M'Cowan telling a young lady client this morning that a Miss Edna Silvester came in for fifty thousand or so. A curious case that of Lenore Saxton's adopted sister."

"I presume you ought to know, if any one does, being buried alive in old M'Cowan's office, these ten years."

"Well, I do flatter myself I know a little. At any rate there will be a decidedly agreeable surprise somewhere, for the legacy, supposed to be forfeited by Miss Silvester's marriage, is *not* forfeited at all; a queer trick of the first Mrs. Saxton's, they say. And the bonds and considerable ready money only await the lady's sig."

"Her husband's a lucky dog—hey? Going to get out here, are you?"

And the two men alighted, leaving Ulmerstone in a state between rage, hope, and unbelief.

Granting it was so, what had he done? Deliberately torn to atoms a fortune of fifty thousand dollars!

He bit his lip fiercely at the bare supposition, and rode on and on, not knowing where he was going, until the stage brought up at the terminus.

Again, as long as he *was* free of her, here was as fine a chance as ever a fellow had; a beautiful girl, of an aristocratic family, with plenty of wealth to back her, and her husband, doubtless.

"Lenore Saxton," her name was, then, daughter of Grandon Saxton, the rich Wall street banker, and adopted sister of—no, not his wife—of Edna Silvester.

Surely there was a visible finger of Fate here; Surely an unusual commingling of parts that crossed and uncrossed very strangely.

He walked down Madison avenue, past Mr. Saxton's mansion, and back to his hotel, where a note awaited him, brief, but very sweet.

"Dear Mr. Ulmerstone," it said, in its beautiful handwriting, and Ulmerstone smiled as he thought he detected a slight uncertainty in the letters, "I just received your unexpected and welcome letter, begging an interview for this evening. I shall be in papa's box at Niblo's to-night, alone. Will you come? Ask for Mr. Saxton's. Yours, L. S."

It was the first time "Jessica" had intimated her name, and here, at once she mentioned her father's and subscribed her own initials.

There was no decision necessary in the case; without the shadow of a doubt he would go to Niblo's, and, amid the crash of the music, the glitter of the lights, ask Lenore Saxton to be his bride.

Precipitate, was he? impulsive? perhaps; but an acquaintance, even by mail, of a few short weeks, seemed a lifetime of knowledge and friendship to such a disposition as he possessed. He flattered himself, and truthfully, that he thoroughly knew Lenore Saxton; all her romantic ideas, all her petty weaknesses, childish vanities, as well as her virtues of strong, constant affectionateness, when she had bestowed it. That she had already bestowed it, and upon him, Ulmerstone had little doubt, and that, when she was once enlisted, heart and soul, in his cause, she would be true to him, despite even parental influence, he doubted still less.



Yes, he would marry her; there was not a soul in the broad universe to utter a disclaiming voice, and with the Saxton money, and allied to the Saxton name, he would find the position he had long looked for.

And to think his acute aunt Rachelle had never hinted of the existence of a young, beautiful girl in the family of her mistress! to think, when they had jested about "Jessica," neither of them dreamed who it was!

Rachelle Hunt would not offer any objection; indeed, Ulmerstone rather supposed she would secretly rejoice over an alliance of the house of Saxton with one of her kin; and as long as there never would be a word lisped regarding the relationship, no one but themselves would, or need be, the wiser.

It was necessary for Vivian to see Rachelle Hunt, and explain the existing condition of affairs; so, before he started for Niblo's that night, he penned a note, merely requesting her to call at his hotel, the ensuing day.

Then, after carefully arranging his toilette, and mailing his letter, Vivian Ulmerstone lighted his cigar, and walked up Broadway, to the decisive interview with Lenore Saxton.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### WOOLING BEHIND THE GAS-LIGHTS.

In her room, flooded with brilliant light, Lenore Saxton stood behind her dressing-case, carefully, critically surveying herself, from the elegantly-arranged hair, that was a marvel of crepe puffs, braids, and curls, black as Egyptian night, to the train of her dark-corded, plum-colored silk, that was relieved, at throat and wrists, by narrow linen collar and cuffs.

Her eyes were bright as diamonds as they met their reflection in the mirror, in approving satisfaction of her appearance; and what wonder was it that they were bright? to-night was to be a crisis in her fate, and she knew it, felt it in every nerve of her body. Had he not said, when he parted from her at their first personal interview, that at the next he had something to tell her? And what could he have to tell her but his love, that she was so blessed with?

True, she had never seen him but once; but she felt that she had known him for years; and, whether or not, Lenore decided deliberately she would accept him and marry him, trusting to time to gain the necessary parental blessing; and she meant money by that.

Yes, she loved him, heart and soul; she had liked him remarkably well when she read his first letter; there was a vim, a dash, a tinge of the man-of-the-world in it, that suited her curious temperament remarkably. Even his handwriting attracted her, and she was a girl to be won by just such trifling things.

Then, when her own eyes—eyes that were keen to criticise, to appreciate beauty of form, and grace—when she really saw him, it needed no more than Vivian Ulmerstone's handsome blonde face, and elegantly worn clothing, and courtly air to complete the conquest.

And now, all this perfection was waiting to be laid at her feet; unknown, an entire stranger, though he was to her and hers, it made no difference to Lenore, she was going to marry him.

Of course, there would be a fearful storm about it; Lenore knew how more than anxious her parents were that she should marry Mr. Carlingford; and while she had deliberately allowed the gentleman to suppose his attentions were agreeable to her, and while she actually enjoyed her flirtation with Mr. Carlingford, she had never for a moment forgotten Ulmerstone, never for a second swerved from her self-sworn allegiance.

She fastened her purple kid gloves, adjusted the narrow gold bands on her small, plump wrists, took up her fan, her opera-glass, and her filmy handkerchief, and went down the grand staircase.

The doors on either side the hall stood open, and she glanced carelessly in, seeing that Mr. and Mrs. Saxton had already departed to a stupid reading at Steinway Hall. At the door the carriage waited, into which she was assisted and driven to the theater.

It was nearly time for the curtain to rise, and the loud, sweet music of the orchestra made every nerve tingle as she swept up the aisle to Mr. Saxton's box.

She had barely time to seat herself and arrange her programme, and adjust her skirts in a graceful dark cloud around her, before the bell tinkled, and the curtain rose.

And Vivian not here!

The pang at her heart told her how madly she loved him, thus to suffer at a tardiness that might only be momentary; but, whether he was

only late, or altogether absent, the play had no attraction for Lenore. Pretty faces, bewitching smiles, and charming toilettes, did not command her attention any more than the glances from the actors, who were not slow to recognize her own beauty.

The curtain had fallen on the first act, and Lenore sat there, still alone, with a feverish glow on her cheeks and a red gleam in her dusky eyes; she sat nervously tapping on the edge of the box with her kidded fingers, wondering, hoping, fearing, praying.

And then—a voice directly over her shoulder sent the blood fairly leaping along every vein.

"Lenore!"

"Oh, Mr. Ulmerstone!"

A mutual smile, a warm pressure of clinging fingers, and, happy almost to ecstasy, Lenore leaned back in her chair.

"I was so afraid you would not come," she said, ingenuously, with a glance at him from the dark eyes she veiled so quickly.

"And would you have cared if I had not come?"

The sudden paling of her face answered him; then the warm blood surged over it again.

"You know best," she said, half laughingly.

"But how did you learn my name—Vivian?"

She added his own in a sweet, timid way that was irresistible.

"Did you not subscribe 'L. S.'? And I knew it was not Lillie, or Louise, or Laurie, or any of those utterly characteristic names young ladies delight in. Then I remembered the maiden in the poem—

"Whom the angels call Lenore."

He smiled down in her happy eyes as he repeated in a low, thrilling tone, this pretty piece of romance, so very different from the matter-of-fact truth of having heard her name mentioned in a 'bus by two young fellows.

But Lenore did not know that. She believed every syllable this lover of hers said, be it ever so improbable. In truth, the nearer ideality and romance he reached in his conversation, the more Lenore admired and appreciated.

"You are very correct at drawing conclusions," she said, when he finished with the line from Poe's "Raven."

"I know I am; and there is another conclusion which, though I dare not say I have actually arrived at, still, I am more than hopeful it is correct."

The piccolo in the orchestra was tinkling the sweetest music Lenore thought she had ever heard; else why the strange bliss that was brooding so calmly over her?

"And you, Lenore, are the oracle I shall consult. Tell me if a certain darling Jessica loves me as I love her?"

It was well that the sudden crash of music came just then, for it drowned the little ecstatic cry that burst involuntarily from Lenore's lips. Vivian did not hear the sound, but he saw the red lips breathlessly apart, and the radiant ascent in her dusky eyes.

"Oh, Vivian! you know she loves you dearly, dearly!"

"My darling!"

Their hands met in a lover's clasp, below the level of the box; and, when the curtain rose again, Lenore Saxton was engaged to Edna Silvester's husband.

"And when may I come to ask Mr. Saxton for you?"

Ulmerstone waited for her tardy answer with more anxiety than he displayed. Not so much to hear that he might come as soon as he chose, but because by her answer he could tell if his opinion of her was correct; that she would brave all for the man she loved, even the just wrath of her parents. By the kindling of the black eyes, and the slowly-dawning smile on her mouth, he forecasted her answer.

"What use would there be in coming, Vivian? I am sure papa will refuse me to you, because—"

"Because what, dearest? That I am an unknown, a vagabond, who dare aspire to the hand of Grandon Saxton's daughter?"

"Oh, Vivian! you a vagabond! Indeed, you are more than worthy of all papa could give you, only—only—you know—"

She seemed unable to utter the grand objection; and Ulmerstone came to the rescue.

"Is it, then, that some other equally appreciative suitor, whom papa cordially approves, is in the way?"

She blushed rosy-red.

"That's the very reason. Papa and mamma are both determined to have me marry Mr. Carlingford; he's very rich, you know."

"I didn't know, and I do not want to know anything but whether my Lenore will marry me."

She stole her warm gloved hand to his own, and let it remain there in so perfectly restful a repose that there was no need of a verbal answer.

"In spite of papa, and mamma, and this rich Mr. Carlingford?"

Vivian's blue eyes were eloquently challenging her for the answer his low, tender voice asked; and the vehement reply actually startled him for a second.

"In spite of all the world, Vivian! I love you, and no one, nothing, shall hinder me from being your wife, if you wish it."

"My own darling! if I wish it! As if I would not risk my very life to win you; and to prove it, Lenore, I am going openly, boldly, to Mr. Saxton, tell him that I love you, that you love me, and ask your hand in marriage."

Lenore's bright face paled.

"But he's sure to say no! All the inducements you could offer would not persuade him."

Vivian seemed fairly to revel in the consternation on her piquant face; she smiled proudly at his utter conquest of this girl.

"Well, and granting all that, my darling, there remains but one course open to us. I shall have done all an honorable man can do; and then, if your father refuses it, we must take our happiness in our own hands."

As he looked at her, his meaning occurred to her forcibly. He loved her so truly that he would marry her clandestinely; she would enjoy the romance of an out-and-out elopement; collect her jewels and perhaps be obliged to sell them, true novel fashion, to pay the expenses of the honeymoon; probably be immortalized in the columns of a certain sensational paper whose reporter on such topics she knew, and who would not fail to describe Miss S—'s beauty, etc., etc.

It would be too delightful! and a smile of anticipatory delight flitted over her face. Vivian saw it, and read it at a glance, and Lenore did not think the mutual smile from his eyes meant anything different from her own thoughts. Really, Ulmerstone was deciding that an "honorable" offer for Lenore's hand, although he knew he would be refused, would be the best course to pursue, for the reason that the Saxtons would be all the more likely to forgive them (and whenever, in song or story, did an only child sue in vain for the parental blessing, forgiveness and—the inheritance?) and receive them with open arms.

"I will see Mr. Saxton to-morrow," Ulmerstone said, as he bade Lenore good-night at the carriage door. "You will hear from me during the day."

And Lenore rode home in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE NEW LIFE.

It was nearly dusk when Edna reached her hotel in Jersey City, and entered her room, so warm and cozy and quiet. She sunk into the low rocking-chair before the fire to think over the strangely unexpected success that had come to her in the hours of that short winter day.

On the table still lay that morning's "Herald," from which she had cut Mr. Carlingford's advertisement; and as she remembered her engagement at Ellenwood, and the pile of letters she had seen on the library table, she felt a thrill of happiness in every fiber of her frame.

She thoroughly liked Ellenwood; its air of elegance, style, quiet, seemed as native as the air she breathed. She liked Mr. Carlingford, with his grave, sweet courtesy of manner, equally removed from familiarity or coldness; and there was something, a vague, half-painful, half-pleasurable emotion that she experienced now, sitting by her lonely fireside, as when in the apartments at Ellenwood, both Mr. Carlingford and his sister had dropped such strong, yet evidently distressful hints of her resemblance to some one. It seemed to Edna it must be the deceased Mrs. Carlingford she unfortunately, for them, was so like; and Edna, while she felt she owed no little of her good fortune to that fact, hoped and intended as far as she was able, that no uncomfortable recollections should arise therefrom.

It was very pleasant for Edna to think, that, like Ellenwood as she did, and the Carlingfords, still, there was no positive need for her going. It was now very sweet, too, for her to realize she was free to—

Free! oh, the horrid, HORRID chains that would burn into her very soul, cover them as she would with flowers; and, because of the suddenly known good fortune that was hers, Edna felt her bonds the tighter, and the need of hiding from her fate all the keener.



She knew, naturally, that her lord and master—to her he was Garnett Fay, and always would be—glad as he might be to have so easily gotten rid of her under circumstances supposed to exist, would be fully as delighted to claim her, before, and by means of, any court in the land, since she would, as he first expected, bring in her hands so fair a freight.

But the chances were that he would not learn the exact condition of affairs; yet, she was not sure; and not sure, surely unsafe. And Ellenwood, in its aristocratic exclusiveness, was a better retreat than the wilds of an African jungle, were Fay or Oberdon to attempt to seek her.

Poor Oberdon! she felt she would have given worlds to see him, hear him speak, tell him all her good news. But it could not be; as from her husband, so from her lover she must hide herself; and while safe and comparatively content in her school-room, let them both seek her near and far, if so they willed to do.

Her reverie lasted long into the darkness of the evening; then she rung for dinner in her room, and learned from the waiter that trunks for a "Mrs. Garnett Fay" had arrived.

"I will re-label them," she said, quietly, while her cheeks flamed at the innocent deception she felt it necessary to repeat. "They are for a friend of mine, Miss Vandeleur, at Ellenwood."

She quickly wrote the labels, had them pasted over the old ones, and at once expressed to her new home.

She seemed to breathe more freely when they had actually gone, and ate her dinner of roast turkey, cranberry-sauce, fried egg-plant, and grapes, with a healthy relish long a stranger to her.

After dinner she sent the chambermaid for the parcel she had left at the furnishing store in the morning, then undressed and retired, and slept soundly until morning.

After breakfast in her room, she ordered and paid her bill, and called a hack to carry her to the Grand Central.

It seemed to her that now she had severed every tie that bound her to her old life; even in name—and she asked herself whether, in the sight of God and humanity, she was not better entitled to the name she had decided to be called by, than the one given her by a ceremony that was only a ceremony.

And she had cut adrift from the leaden-footed past, the immediate past, that was none the less weighty that it had been so short. She thought, in her pure nobility of mind, that she could learn to be content with what goods the gods gave her; she wanted to drink the cup given to her lips without, like a nauseated child, making an ugly face over it. She believed, in honest truth, she could learn to regard her life as a peculiarly isolated one, even from the temptation of friendship with Oberdon Audrey.

And there hung the only lingering doubt she was carrying into her new life. *Could* she forget him so utterly as to insure herself the calm peace she wanted so to feel? Yes; she thought, she hoped—

And just that minute, glancing carelessly through the window of her carriage, she saw a face that sent her blood bounding madly through her veins, that made her finger-ends fairly tingle, her heart almost leap to her throat.

Alas, for her brave heart! alas, for the conquest of nature over necessity! and Edna, after that brief, passing glimpse of Oberdon Audrey's worried, haggard, handsome face, as he hurried along with the crowd through Broadway, sunk back among the cushions and cried for very sharpness of agony and love.

She *did* love him; she *did*: no matter whether she were bound or free; and, in the fetters, or unshackled, her soul's lord was Oberdon Audrey.

And to have to bury this love, once so freely offered, and so plainly refused—to bury it and carry her dead to Ellenwood with her!

But the cab rattled on, and Edna dried her eyes, and doubled her veil over her face, fearful lest the bright morning sunlight would betray the traces of her agitation.

She gained her seat in the train, and rode swiftly to the new life; this time with no misgivings as to her success in the great, grand house that lay, like a monster castle, in the winter sunshine.

She bowed pleasantly to the lad who directed her the day before, and passed through the open gateway at the entrance to Ellenwood.

A merry peal of laughter, followed by the little girls, May and June, dressed in scarlet merino dresses, with white fur cloaks and turbans, looking like little winter fairies as they came

bounding toward Edna, seemed to her a very psalm of welcome to home.

She stooped and kissed them, and took them both by the hand, walking slowly up the wide walk, smiling in her sweet, grave way, and being entertained by the merry laughter and childish remarks of the little girls.

Half-way up the walk, a sharp turn round a low, graceful arbor, brought them face to face with Mr. Carlingford, who was giving directions to his gardener.

His face lighted at sight of Edna; he raised his hat courteously.

"Miss Vandeleur! I am glad you have arrived. May and June have been expecting you since breakfast, when your luggage came. If you will take Miss Vandeleur to the house, children, it will be the best thing you can do. She is cold, and aunt Annie has hot coffee ready."

Edna thanked him, and told him that though she had already breakfasted, a cup of hot coffee with Miss Carlingford was to be desired. And then, she and the children went to the house.

At the entrance Miss Carlingford met her with a warm grasp of the hands and a kiss full of sisterly affection.

"My dear child, welcome to Ellenwood! Come right in, and take off your wraps."

And by the blazing fire in her own room, so large, elegant, convenient, Edna actually realized to what a haven of rest she had, in God's providence, been directed.

The Carlingfords were her friends. She knew it, else why their delicate, kindly attentions? or was it the way of the world for people to treat their employees the way she had been treated?

It was very sweet to Edna to be thus regarded. Hers had been an empty life, until of very recent days; altogether void of those charming home courtesies that make life so attractive, so worth cultivating. Here at Ellenwood, it seemed, even from the few brief glimpses, as if a subtle charm held every member of the household in a sweet embrace; a sense of refinement, purest affection, self-sacrifice, from Mr. Carlingford to May, characterized them, and Edna knew, in the quiet, calm and serenity, the best balm for her wounded spirit was to be found.

Very pleasantly the days came and went. Duties in the school-room, romps out of study hours, long walks in the grounds, delicious evenings among the books in the library, where she was welcome as birds in spring.

These innocent amusements constituted Edna's life at Ellenwood. She did not care to go out with Miss Carlingford; she had no intention of seeing, or being seen by, two pairs of eyes, she felt were on the lookout for her, in all probability.

Aside from her exclusiveness, there was a great deal of gayety at Ellenwood. Dinners, evening dances, grand sleighing parties, and entertainments for the children; and, in her room, Edna would listen to the music, and the sound of footsteps, and wonder if it was possible she had ever cared enough to participate in such frivolity, and—this with a certain tightening of her heart-strings—was it possible she ever again could dance from very lightness of heart?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TWO SUITORS AND A DISMISSAL.

LENORE came down to the nine-o'clock breakfast on the morning after the memorable evening in the theater-box, with a radiance on her face that was noticeable, piquant and gay as she always was.

As she entered the room, looking so beautiful in her pale pink cashmere morning-robe, that swept from throat to feet in a long, graceful train, buttoned its entire length with large gold squares, Mr. Saxton arose from his chair beside the register, and laid down his morning paper.

"I have not kept you waiting, have I papa, mamma? I am sorry, I am sure."

She glanced from Mr. Saxton to Mrs. Saxton, who sat quietly, patiently, on a low hassock beside her husband; the two had evidently been engaged in conversation, and the subject seemed the open letter that lay in Mrs. Saxton's hand.

"We waited, not because you were a trifle tardy, but on account of the suddenly-acquired importance Miss Lenore has attained. My daughter, with all my heart I congratulate you."

Mr. Saxton bent toward her, and lightly kissed her forehead.

Lenore looked inquiringly at him, then at Mrs. Saxton's pleasant, approving face.

"Yes, dear, we highly approve your choice. You might have known our consent was readily obtainable."

A rush of vivid color surged over Lenore's

face. Vivian had not been tardy in begging her hand; and, strange to say, his suit was thus favorably granted! Lenore's eyes filled with happy tears; this sudden good fortune was too much bliss; what *would* Vivian say when he saw her?

"Oh, mamma! how can we ever thank you? Papa, you dear, darling old papa!"

She wound her arms around his neck, and kissed his cheek again and again.

"You see we knew what was for the best, Lenore, now. But the coffee will not improve by further waiting. Sit down, and listen to your suitor's model letter."

Lenore took her seat, almost in a maze of astonishment. Even Vivian's letter—and how delicate of him to consult her father by letter!—was a model. She could not eat; joy and an appetite often are at variance; but she sipped her steaming coffee, and toyed with a morsel of broiled salmon.

Mr. Saxton drank his cup of coffee, and while his egg was boiling, read the short, gentlemanly note.

"My dear Mr. Saxton," it said, "you will be surprised, doubtless, at this unexpected proposal I make for the hand of your daughter, Lenore. I think I do not flatter myself when I say she loves me; I know I am correct when I affirm I love her. May I, with your consent, ask of her her consent to be my wife? I need not say with what anxiety I await your answer."

"That's what I call a model letter. Short, terse, and to the point. Any girl might be proud of such a lover."

Lenore was trembling with actual delight.

"Shall you say yes, papa? Oh, I love him so, it would kill me if you refused!"

Mrs. Saxton smiled indulgently.

"My darling, you shall not be refused. You have won for your husband the man of all men we preferred; and whom any young girl should feel proud to marry. You do yourself justice, my dear, in loving Mr. Carlingford so truly."

A sharp, sudden cry burst from Lenore's lips, that turned palely blue.

"Mr. Carlingford! Mr. Carlingford! Is that letter from him?"

She arose from her chair, and pointed to the open sheet. Mr. Saxton gazed at her in unfeigned bewilderment that was equaled by his wife's silent surprise.

"Of course it's from Mr. Carlingford, and it's the grandest compliment you ever had paid you in your life. Who would it be from, if not from Mr. Carlingford?"

Lenore sunk back in her chair, so pale it alarmed Mrs. Saxton.

"What does it all mean?" she asked Lenore, sternly, as she handed her her smelling-salts. "It looks very suspiciously like another lover."

"Another lover!" Mr. Saxton repeated his wife's words angrily. "And if there is another lover, what possible difference can it make? Lenore is to marry Mr. Carlingford."

Lenore's color surged back at the threatening words. All her sudden crushing disappointment and sorrow fled before the antagonism Mr. Saxton's defiant language produced.

"No," she returned, very quietly, but with a certain decisiveness her parents had long ago learned was folly to combat. "No; I shall not marry Mr. Carlingford. I have another lover, to whom I am engaged, and whom I shall marry."

A slow, gradual glitter gathered in Lenore's eyes as she delivered her fiat; and then, having partially paved the way for Vivian Ulmerstone's coming, she left the room.

After her dignified departure, a silence reigned in the breakfast parlor for several moments. Then Mr. Saxton broke it.

"Who can it be? What shall we do about it? You know as well as I that any attempt to coerce Lenore will result in the most ignominious failure."

Mr. Saxton was angry; his wife saw that by the way he crushed the letter in his hand as well as by his harsh language. She, herself, was vexed terribly.

"Of course she shall marry no one else. And to think what Mr. Carlingford will say when he finds himself refused. He, the owner of Ellenwood, whom any woman in America might be proud to wed, whose first wife was an English lady of rank, Lord Cambridge's daughter, was she not?"

There was a perfect wail in Mrs. Saxton's voice as she enumerated the attractions that had failed to impress her daughter.

Mr. Saxton sat moodily looking across the table through the window.

"Another lover! Some impecunious young fool who has been cursed with enough brains



and heard to make Lenore fancy she had at last found the one thing desirable! I'd like ten minutes' interview with the young chap; he'd find the Saxton name and Saxton money wasn't to be had for the asking."

And as if some fateful fairy had dovetailed affairs that morning, there came that moment a ring at the door, followed, two minutes later, by the footman, with a card on a silver salver.

Mr. Saxton read it aloud, gruffly.

"'VIVIAN ULMERSTONE.'

"Sounds like the rascal we're talking about," he said, as he withdrew from the room, polishing his glasses on his white silk handkerchief, and wearing on his countenance an expression of severest virtue.

As he crossed the threshold, he saw a well-dressed, self-assured young man arise promptly from a *dos-a-dos*, and advance, with a suave courtesy, bowing.

"Mr. Saxton—Mr. Grandon Saxton?"

"Yes, that's my name. And you are—"

He was determined to give this fellow no vantage-ground; so he would not even pronounce his name, but pointed, with a sniff of supreme indifference, to the card he had carried with him.

"I am Vivian Ulmerstone, sir. I have called on an errand of gravest importance, and I beg your kind indulgence for only a very few minutes."

He politely placed a chair for Mr. Saxton's convenience, but it was almost rudely scorned.

"I have five minutes to spare, exactly. Proceed, sir."

He opened his watch, and laid it in his hand; then fixed his cold eyes on Vivian's face. Vivian could have knocked him down, so insolently patronizing was his air, but he remembered his role, and began to play it precisely as he had rehearsed it.

"Miss Lenore has, perhaps, spoken of me. On her account and my own I have come, as an honorable man, and a suppliant to you for the great favor of your consent to our marriage. I love her, and am prepared to do my duty by her."

He never blushed, even under Mr. Saxton's prolonged, unwinking stare, followed by an ominously unpleasant silence, broken by Mr. Saxton.

"Is that all?"

The odd, terse question, so purposely put to insult, almost made Vivian foam.

"That is all," he said, curbing his pride with an almost superhuman power.

Mr. Saxton peered over his glasses a full second, then slowly snapped his watch-case shut, and returned it to his pocket.

"Time is up, sir. You can't have her. Good-morning."

He gave a little nod, that Vivian could not brook. His face suddenly paled, and he stepped immediately in the way of Mr. Saxton's exit.

"I have made my claim as any gentleman should, and I demand to be treated as a gentleman. I am a recognized suitor for your daughter's hand; and, as the man she has honored by her own free choice, I consider myself entitled to more courtesy than you have deemed expedient to show. Your daughter's happiness involves more than you seem to realize."

He looked worthy any cause, thus bravely urging his claims; and even Mr. Saxton, behind his glasses, saw that Lenore's choice did credit to her taste, at any rate.

"Sir, you have my answer. My daughter is not in a position to marry any young man who happens to take a fancy to her pretty face and her father's money. I don't know who you are, and I don't want to. You may be a gambler, or a tract distributor; it's all the same to me. You can't have Lenore. She is to be married very shortly to a gentleman in every way her equal."

With which parting shaft, Mr. Saxton walked unconcerned from the room.

Vivian heard the quiet order he gave in the hall.

"Attend Mr. Vivian Ulmerstone to the door, Mike, at once."

And Vivian took his hat and walked to the door, with a smile on his handsome face he intended should mask his feelings.

And it did, completely, and when he thrust a dollar greenback in the footman's palm, he knew he had made a powerful friend, to be reserved for a not far-off future contingency.

All in all, he was not disappointed with his futile interview. He had expected the same result, though without the accompanying needless insults, the memory of which served to increase his determination to elope with Lenore Saxton, and thereby show the irate old gentleman how useless his refusals had been.

He had previously decided to marry Lenore Saxton even before he knew, positively, of the wishes of her father regarding it; but now, with the remembrance of Mr. Saxton's manner of so summarily disposing of him, Ulmerstone determined that twenty-four hours should not elapse before Lenore was his wife.

He took it for granted, with the easy self-assurance of a man of the world, that even the pompous father of his only daughter would be glad, some day, to come to terms with a son-in-law, who, after suitably asking for his child, loved her enough to make a runaway match of it.

But, looking on the very darkest side, Ulmerstone could see in a life with Lenore Saxton no such blank future as he had anticipated with Edna Silvester, for the reason that he liked Lenore better, so far, than any woman he ever had seen.

Yes, thinking of Lenore and her father, as he walked leisurely down Madison avenue, he made up his mind that he would post a letter to Lenore within an hour, with entreaties—he smiled as he thought how needless they would be—and instructions to meet him, fully prepared, at the place he should designate, that very evening.

And Mr. Grandon Saxton should have the delightful satisfaction of knowing how very authoritatively his pompously insolent treatment had been regarded.

He had said to himself, a half-hour ago, that, even if Mr. Saxton never relented, a life with Lenore would not be so uncongenial as one with Edna, whose pure, sweet refinement was so far above his appreciation. But, he found himself suddenly wondering *how* could he and Lenore live on nothing?

His aunt Rachel had said, truly, he was master of a well-paying trade; as a superior draughtsman, Vivian Ulmerstone could earn his hundred dollars a week, by expending only a healthful amount of labor; but a life of treadmill routine, even for so fair a remuneration, was not what Mr. Ulmerstone liked, and what he did not like, he was morally sure not to do.

Hence, this difficulty rose, mountain-high, when once he gave sober thought to it; and, naturally co-existent with this reflection, came the one that he had let slip as good a chance, monetarily, as Lenore, on the day he had destroyed all proof of his marriage to Edna Silvester.

Then, at the time, he was elated over his *coup de main*; now, when no human power could put Edna in his power, he, like a spoiled child, began to long for his forfeited toy.

A stinging memory that she loved not him—who could not endure to be second in any one's affections—even when transient—but this audacious Oberdon Audrey made him feel jealously uncomfortable, and the remembrance of her pure, fair face, with its wistful eyes, its proud, high-bred expression, came vividly before him, with the mental query, had he done wisely, after all?

He wondered where she was—she and her fifty thousand dollars; whether she utterly hated him; whether he could possibly find her.

And with these thoughts, this oddly-compounded man—a genius in his way, capable of so much better things, doomed to such a bitter end—went on his way to arrange his elopement with his wife's adopted sister!

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE WARNING WORD.

THE doors of the Saxton mansion had barely closed after Vivian's departure, when Lenore was summoned, more peremptorily than she remembered ever to have been called for before. She recognized her father's hand on the bell, by the series of short, angry jerks that made the cord fairly snap; but, justly wrathful though she knew Mr. Saxton would be, judging both from his manner at the breakfast-table, and the unfavorably short interview he had with her lover, Lenore was in nowise abashed or discouraged. She had made up her mind to marry Vivian Ulmerstone, and she determinedly, almost doggedly, went down the stairs to the library.

The enemy were in full force; that is, Mrs. Saxton—whose cool, contemptuous indifference Lenore disliked even more than her father's plain, blunt manner—and Mr. Saxton sat in their customary places, in silence and ironical respect.

As Lenore well knew beforehand, she found her father restless, angry, eager for the inevitable fray; Mrs. Saxton calm, collected, courteous, but with an inexhaustible fund of combative policy stored in reserve.

She walked in, with an air that made the old gentleman's cheeks redder than ever, that provoked a still more steely glitter in the lady's eyes. She took a vacant chair near the door, and seated herself, with dainty deliberation, on the extreme edge; she folded her hands demurely, and waited for the opening of the attack.

Mr. Saxton pointed to a freshly-written letter on one of the desks; and Lenore looked cheerfully at it.

"It is a reply to the letter I read you this morning. If you desire it, I will read it."

He made a motion to take it; but Lenore gestured a negative.

"There is no need, papa. I presume you have said what you pleased, and the simple fact of my knowing it can make no difference."

"Exactly, my dear." This was said in Mrs. Saxton's smooth, pleasant tones. "You could not have expressed the fact more correctly. The reply to Mr. Carlingford is what, in both your father's and my judgment, is the very best decision we could make, for your future happiness and welfare."

A little white spot began to gleam on each of Lenore's cheeks; she tapped the floor with her slipped foot somewhat saucily.

"And all we need, Lenore, is for you to sign your name below my signature, that Mr. Carlingford shall know you freely accept his offer."

She felt their eyes fairly burning on her face; she knew this was the gauntlet, thrown directly at her; she knew, now, her colors must be boldly unfurled, for good and all. She experienced a slight thrill of excitement that made every nerve quiver, and then—she drew the line between good and evil; she cast the die that made her choice between parents, who, if perhaps too heroic in their treatment of Lenore's infatuation, were, in their own way, indulgent and kindly thoughtful; a thousandfold more deserving her loyal obedience than the man, the stranger, and still the lover, for whom, with whom she would risk her future, for weal or woe.

When she spoke, her tones were fairly electric with suppressed, well-controlled nervous excitement; she addressed her father, directly:

"You might have known I would not have signed any such document. Even if I did, what a burlesque it would be! You *know* I would not marry Mr. Carlingford with my free will and consent; if you do not yet know that fact, I tell you now."

As she finished, she compressed her lips resolutely, and coolly awaited an outburst; it came, from Mr. Saxton:

"Then, by Jupiter, you shall marry him without your consent! and if there is law enough, and power enough, in New York city, you shall see that skulking, adventurous scoundrel, who has dared to cause this domestic difficulty, put where he can trouble neither you nor me, again. You hear that?"

"I hear," she said, quietly; then Mrs. Saxton's voice, such a contrast to her husband's, in its sweet, measured cadences, but so fraught with malignant rage that, for a second, Lenore actually shivered:

"You forget, my dear, how your refusal will appear to Mr. Carlingford. We are all aware how you encouraged him; indeed, at the time, your marked appreciation of his attentions was a source of expressed congratulation among us all. Surely you will not wish to lower yourself in his estimation."

Mrs. Saxton smiled; she had laid her snare, and now triumphantly waited for her daughter to be caught in it.

But Lenore was fully as wise as her astute mother—thanks to that mother's training.

"I remember you *did* advise me to secure this eligible middle-aged party, mamma; and if my innocent little flirtation with him was literally accepted, why?"—with a shrug of her shoulders—"I cannot see that I am to blame. I have flirted often enough before, and no one objected."

Mrs. Saxton bit her lip.

"That's neither here nor there," said Mr. Saxton, gruffly. "Keep to the point. As I said before, you are to marry Mr. Carlingford; and if you will not sign your name—even your initials, anything, it shall go as it is; and, according to my urgent wish, Mr. Carlingford shall see you to-morrow."

Lenore's lips curled; she arose proudly from her chair, and looked her father full in the face.

"You may send it or not, as you choose. It will make no difference to me, for I shall not marry Mr. Carlingford, and I *shall* marry Mr. Ulmerstone, notwithstanding the ungentlemanly manner in which you treated him an hour ago."

"But—"



Mr. Saxton rose excitedly to his feet; Lenore calmly interrupted his remark:

"There is no need to prolong this interview. At breakfast I supposed I had fully decided the matter; now, I must emphatically refuse any further discussion on the distasteful subject."

Like a queen of tragedy on a Broadway stage, she literally swept from the room, her very garments rustling angrily as they brushed their rich drapery over the Moquet carpet.

"I'll see! I'll see if a child of mine dare upset all my well-laid plans. She shall marry Carlingford, or—"

Mr. Saxton paused for want of a sufficiently threatening alternative.

"Shall you send the acceptance?" Mrs. Saxton asked, suggestively.

He snatched up the letter, put it in the envelope, and rung the bell violently.

"Here, have this mailed at once. At once, d'ye hear?"

Then, when the footman, with stolid face, and wily inquisitive mind as to what was up, had gone with the precious letter, Mr. Saxton nodded emphatically to his wife.

"That's the way to do business, and, my word for it, when she sees Carlingford here, fully expecting her to regard him as her husband, she'll give in. Depend upon it, she'll give in when she learns we mean what we say."

But the lady smiled, almost contemptuously.

"Is it possible you know Lenore no better? My word for it, unless she changes her mind from some external influences, you nor I can ever make her marry him."

Mr. Saxton nodded again, sagaciously.

"Very well, we'll see."

"Yes," returned she, oracularly, "we will see."

"LENORE, MY DARLING: I need hardly tell you the success—or rather the failure—of my interview with your father; in a few words, dearest, he positively refused your dear hand to me, and ordered me from his roof, under which I knew you were waiting for the verdict."

"But, Lenore, you remember we agreed on our plan in case of this anticipated result; you know you promised to be my own, come what might. And now, dearest, I shall keep you to my promise, at once, because, by waiting, what will be gained?"

"To-night, then—does my promptness startle you, darling?—will you come to me? I shall be in readiness, at the place where we met, to claim my bride."

"You will come, Lenore? At the Pennsylvania Railroad depot, to-night, at eight o'clock?"

"I need not ask, I know, for you will be there; and we will take the through train to Washington, be married the hour we arrive, and start on our blissful bridal tour."

"Your own preparations, dearest, you can make without hint of mine. Your good common sense will teach you what to take, what to leave."

"Then, my own, till eight o'clock to-night, *au revoir*. V. U."

Ulmerstone read the note hastily over after he wrote it, placed it in the envelope, and sent it to the mail.

"It is very good, quite to the point, and certainly devoted. If she only takes the hint regarding her share of the preparations, all will be O. K. I fear my miserable hundred dollars, the remains of dear 'auntie Fay's' noble generosity in providing for Edna Silvester's wedding-tour, will not make very luxurious Lenore's bridal trip."

He lighted his twenty-five cent cigar, with as much nonchalance as though he were sole heir to Stewart's little fortune.

"By-the-by," he said—he had a way of soliloquizing, half audibly—"I wonder what's the reason I haven't heard from aunt Rachel on the subject under consideration? I should have had an answer to-day, at latest, although what she can have to say can make no difference, unless she has the forethought to inclose a comfortable-sized check on the Broadway Bank, payable at sight."

He seemed determined to enjoy the last of his bachelor privileges, for he remained in his room during the day, reading, smoking, packing his portmanteau, making some changes in his toilette.

At four o'clock, the hall-boy tapped at his door, with a telegram, which, when he read, had a curious effect on him. It ran:

"On no account marry L. Sure to be disinherited. It can be made all right with E—. I was correct from the first."

It was signed "R. H.," and when he read it, he uttered something like a curse; then walked

vexedly to and fro for an hour, with knitted brow and sullen face.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE ARRESTING HAND.

"ON no account marry L.," the telegram from Rachel Hunt said that, and Vivian naturally wondered why she was so peremptory in her commands.

She gave her reason—that Lenore was sure to be cut off from the parental legacy, which, to both Rachel and Vivian, was a mighty reason, potent to do or undo, any thing.

Of course—and Vivian utterly forgot his lofty flights of romantic duty—of course, he would not be anxious to marry Lenore, with all her beauty, and style, and position, without her fortune, any more than Edna, minus her small portion. Then, granted that Rachel's information was correct, and that she always was correct was plainly implied in the concluding sentences of her telegram, Vivian Ulmerstone had got himself in a fix, out of which he saw no possible extrication.

He was engaged to run off with Grandon Saxton, the millionaire's daughter, to whom the penitent wanderers would ultimately return, to wide-open doors, arms, hearts, and check-books; but to elope with merely a pretty, disinherited girl, simply because they fancied they cared for each other—was folly without measure. Even Edna, and a life with Edna, could not have been much worse.

But, "it can be made all right with E.," and "E." had the money after all—Edna, his own bashful wife, whom, but for his confounded blunder in so effectually destroying the only proof of his marriage, he might have that hour claimed.

What an intricate labyrinth he seemed groping through! How, at every turn, new developments upstart, utterly confounding all past revelations, relentlessly preventing future confidence. Who was he, anyhow? or, as he asked himself more plainly, who did he wish himself to be? Edna Silvester's husband, or Lenore Saxton's lover?

And then, with a rush of Satanic suggestion, there occurred to him a thought, that, in its sudden force, its full measure of utter pitilessness, its bold, plausible, horrible front, made him, callous man of the world though he was, blush redly in sheer shame.

And yet, and yet, why not? Edna's husband, when he found her; in the interim, Lenore's lover. What easier? What more natural? the one would not interfere with the other; the elopement could proceed as arranged, only—the difference that "only" made, was a difference that, force itself as it might upon his sympathy, his principle, his honor, Vivian Ulmerstone would not contemplate. He had made up his mind, suddenly, as he always did; he was aided by all the worst ambitions of a naturally depraved soul; he would act as pleased him alone, and the consequences must take care of themselves. It was almost frightful—the ease, the care, the indifference with which he finished his few preparations for this journey of his, that, bad as it was according to his first arrangements, was angelic compared to the later ones; then, his hotel bill paid, his luggage sent by an expressman, he started forth, handsome, smiling, to take a foolish, headstrong girl by the hand, and lead her in the first steps of the path that kept on to his own destruction and hers.

Now, that this clearly-defined purpose had obtained possession of him, Ulmerstone began, involuntarily, to lose his respect for Lenore—this girl who was risking so much more, so infinitely much more than she knew, for his sake. He began to think none too well of her; he looked at her through his own morally perverted vision, and found her what she was—a silly, romantic, headstrong, passionate girl, not absolutely, literally unprincipled, but who recklessly trifled with all that a modest woman holds sacred, that a severe critic would hardly be at fault in calling her, at least, of unenviable disposition, morally speaking; that, with a proper guiding hand, might have been trained, like a wayward vine, into all that was fair, useful, admirable.

Strange thoughts, these, to have had place in his heart, as he walked to and fro on the forward deck of the ferry-boat, waiting till it should touch the dock, and he might jump the chain and go to Lenore.

He was sure he would see her within the station waiting-room; he was so confident of her obeying his commands, that there was not a doubt to disturb his calm serenity of mind as he walked leisurely across the dark ferry-house to the entrance of the depot.

The first face he saw as he delivered his ticket—he had purchased two fares, first-class, to Washington, in New York—was Lenore's, radiant, piquant, beautiful.

He raised his hat with a courtly grace that sent Lenore's pulses bounding—she was so affected by such trivial accomplishments—then hastened toward her, offering her his arm.

"My darling! you are true as steel. I knew you would not repent, any more than myself."

"Repent what? That I am to be your wife? How strange it would be if I could not surmount all difficulties for that! I shall never repent, Vivian."

She was singularly calm and composed; she leaned on his arm with a perfect restfulness, a complete merging of herself into his especial protection; and Vivian Ulmerstone felt the pressure of her fingers on his arm, the slight weight of her body beside him; he saw the dark, tender light in her eyes; he heard her aver her confidence in, her great love for, him; and yet, he never repented.

For fifteen or twenty minutes they promenaded beside the train; and Vivian suddenly remembered Lenore's luggage.

"I brought nothing—but myself," she said, brightly. "I have some money with which I shall buy what I need; papa gave me my quarter's allowance yesterday."

Vivian would have given anything to have learned the amount of the millionaire's indulgence to his only child.

"How fortunate for you! and how little he expected what use you would make of it. I presume he is the soul of generosity to you."

It was a sly hint, and Lenore accepted it, unconsciously.

"Papa is generous; he has given me five hundred dollars a quarter for a year or two, and I never spend it all. I had over a thousand dollars in the bank when I drew it this morning."

Vivian's cheeks glowed with delight. A thousand dollars! a trip to Europe that meant, after the tour to Washington. He was in luck, after all, even to the comparatively small number of passengers on the cars; in the coach he took—the Pullman palace car "Starucca"—there were only three beside themselves—a young man, in traveling attire, almost disguised in his seal-skin cap and high, fur-trimmed overcoat collar; the others, two elderly ladies, one of whom seemed quite an invalid.

Ulmerstone's quick, scrutinizing glance on the occupants of the car was satisfactory to himself, for, with a look of relief that no acquaintance was on hand to play the spy, he gave Lenore a seat, in the center of the car, on a comfortable, low, velvet-cushioned rocking-chair, beside a marble-top table.

He was sure of a delightful *tete-a-tete*, at all events, during the long ride. The ladies were entirely occupied with themselves, and he saw at a glance would trouble no one. The young man, wrapped so closely in his heavy cloak, sat somewhat closer than Ulmerstone cared for; yet, he seemed fatigued, and even sleepy-looking, for all there was a gleam in his black eyes Ulmerstone noticed the moment he saw them.

However, he was a perfect stranger, and strangers never paid much attention to other strangers' affairs. And so Ulmerstone dismissed the thought, and settled himself in his chair, to entertain and be entertained.

The train started, sped on faster and faster, through Jersey City, the Deep Cut, out on the dreary meadows, into Newark, off again, past scattered farm-houses, isolated suburban residences, into Elizabeth, Rahway, New Brunswick, and then off into a long, swift ride before the next stopping-place—Trenton.

All this while, Ulmerstone's handsome head had been bent in close proximity to the back of Lenore's chair; a low, murmuring conversation kept continually up, varied by an occasional low, melodious laugh from Lenore's lips.

She was very happy; perfectly content with this lover of hers, whom she believed to be as loyal as she was. She had proved, implicitly, her confidence in him, never, for a moment, dreaming he was so foully untrue; never doubting but that he was pleased and proud to marry a daughter of Grandon Saxton, for whose hand other men had sued in vain.

Her future was as bright, to her, as sunlight. Of course they would be forgiven; was there ever a novel where they were not? They would go back to Madison avenue, and her father would be so sorry for the way in which he had spoken to her husband, and Mrs. Saxton would at once appreciate his style, his handsome face, his elegant address. They would be so happy. And Ulmerstone watched her radiant face, with its rare variation of expression, her vivid crimson cheeks, her shiny eyes, and thought she



really was a pretty little thing, only he rather feared he might tire of such exuberant beauty and spirit by and by.

For the present, he thought Washington a very pretty place, and Willard's a good hotel; after that, Europe for six months, on a modest scale. The train was slowing up at Trenton as he arrived at that conclusion, and he leaned toward Lenore to tell her his plans for the continental tour, when the car-door opened, and a policeman, in full uniform, walked through the car, up to him, and laid his gloved hand heavily on his shoulder.

"You are arrested, sir, by order of a telegram from Mr. Grandon Saxton, Madison avenue, on charge of abduction of his daughter."

Ulmerstone muttered an oath, and sprang to his feet, while Lenore, white as death, sat motionless in her chair.

The young gentleman in the seal-skin cap arose and bowed courteously to Lenore.

"Miss Saxton—if I can be of any assistance—"

She started at the familiar tones.

"Oh, Mr. Audrey! Oh, what shall I do?"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### STRIKING TRAIL.

If Lenore had been thunderstricken to hear Oberdon Audrey's voice, Vivian Ulmerstone was no less astonished and chagrined and enraged to discover their traveling-companion.

He turned with a scowl to Audrey—this man who had crossed his path at such an inauspicious moment, this man he had heard of before as the lover of his wife. He had hated him with an unreasoning jealousy before; now, he could have throttled him where he stood.

There was a marked difference between these two men, whose paths had indeed crossed in such strange intricacy. One the husband of Edna Silvester, handsome as an Apollo, with a malignant devilishness stamped on every perfect feature; with a cold glitter in his blue eyes, and a dumb wrath on his mouth. The other, in his superior moral strength, his calm, dignified demeanor, his proud assumption of the rights of a true gentleman as he offered his services to the stricken, mortified girl.

It was only a second they confronted each other; Ulmerstone looking on Audrey as his rival in one case, his witness to his sin in this present one; while Audrey, to whom Lenore's lover was a perfect stranger, viewed him as such, never dreaming him to be the Garnett Fay who had wrecked Edna's happiness, who was the one, only barrier between him and earthly bliss.

Only a brief second of silence; and Ulmerstone broke it:

"I understand I am your prisoner? Have the laws been changed for my individual benefit, or have previous elopements been winked at?"

A shadow of a smile flitted over Audrey's face.

"Neither, Mr.—? You have no one to censure or give credit to but myself. At Newark, I telegraphed to Mr. Saxton, bidding him send instructions to the police at Trenton."

"You—you? By heavens, you shall pay for this! You shall answer for this—you—"

But the train moved slowly on, and the firm hold on his arm by the officer warned him of the inglorious termination of his schemes.

"Lively, if you please," the policeman said, and Ulmerstone had only time to spring from the platform, and the train, with Lenore and Audrey, glided on, away.

"I have instructions to detain you only so long as the young lady requires to get beyond your reach. When the train crosses the Delaware bridge, you can consider yourself at liberty."

Evidently the officer's sympathies were on the side of the lovers, for he smiled and winked as he spoke; but both these pleasantries were lost on Ulmerstone, who was looking at the darkness into which the train had disappeared, with a frown on his forehead, and a stern, set look in his eyes.

He seemed to recover himself at the sound of the friendly voice.

"Thank you. It is rather a disappointment, to both the young lady and myself. Do you think the train is over in Pennsylvania yet?"

The man consulted his watch.

"Hardly. However, as you want to return to New York, doubtless, you had better purchase your ticket inside now; the Kensington express is due in several minutes."

Ulmerstone decided it was best to return to New York. Oberdon Audrey would be there, before long, and he wanted to see him, only once more. Besides, now that the first part of the programme had come to such a sudden ter-

mination, he thought he would give it up of his own accord, rather than run the risk again.

He would start off, now, on a new track; he would find Edna.

So he bought his ticket, took his seat in the train when it steamed into the station; fixed himself cozily in a seat, leaned his back against the cushions, and thought over his affair, till he fell into a doze, only awakening when the cars entered the gloom of the Jersey City depot at midnight.

He had bestowed scarcely a thought on Lenore, he was so thoroughly selfish, and he was so completely used to caring only for himself. Besides, with all his wickedness, if he had really loved her, he would not have given her up thus easily. But, sentimental as he had felt about her, at various times, he had never actually loved her, with an affection stronger than death. It was his misfortune—this inability to attach himself constantly to any one; this same deplorable trait of character was manifested as well in his roving, rambling habits that led him such a vagabond existence, as in the remarkable ease with which he first won Edna, then allowed her to escape him; then flirt with Lenore, and give her up as readily; and then, because circumstances favored, to seek out Edna again. Not that he loved her a whit more than he ever did. Really, he always experienced a sense of abashed inferiority when he contrasted himself with her, that of its very nature was proof positive that he did not love her; for love knows nothing but equality; and Vivian Ulmerstone knew Edna Silvester was too good for him.

But this very knowledge, added to the fact that she had eluded him, gave him a fictitious enthusiasm regarding her; and as a spoiled child, accustomed to cry for, and get what is especially intended it shall, on no account, have, so he wanted to claim Edna as his wife, and enjoy, for his reward, not only her wealth, but the triumph he knew he would be obliged to achieve before he did claim her.

He had not the slightest idea where she was. He had never caught sight of her since the moment he left her in her dressing-room on their marriage-night. She had vanished as effectually as if the earth had opened and swallowed her.

How to begin his quest he could not tell; but he determined on consulting Rachelle Hunt; she would know; she knew every thing, it seemed to him.

Arrived at Jersey City, the thought occurred to him that perhaps the friendly police-officer at Trenton had telegraphed to Mr. Saxton of his return, despite his apparent sympathy, and the parting cigar at the car door; and Ulmerstone accordingly prevented any such possible *contretemps* by alighting from the rear end of the train, and quietly making his way across several railroad tracks, through Prospect street, and so came into Montgomery street, without having passed the ticket-taker at the lawful exit.

He walked up to the American House, and, by a strange coincidence, was shown the room occupied by Edna Silvester only a few nights before. He was in no mood for sleep when he locked the door after him, his nap in the cars having sufficed for the time being. He walked aimlessly up and down, from the windows to the bedstead at the rear end of the room; from the bureau to the rocking-chair, where Edna had sat through those dreary hours of mental contest.

He plunged his hands in his pockets, stretched his legs at full length, and delivered himself to the utter loneliness of the hour; thinking what that rascal Audrey, would have to say to Lenore, and wondering if, now he was off the carpet, she would not be made to marry that elderly party she had told him of. It seemed to him very probable that such would be the case; and he wondered why it was he did not feel as hatefully jealous of that Mr. — Mr. — he forgot the name—as he did of Oberdon Audrey. There was not much danger of his forgetting that name; and he decided the reason he was not jealous of him, was, not that he loved Edna better than Lenore, but simply because he had a claim on Edna that no man on earth could deny!

And this Oberdon Audrey was his wife's lover! His wife! He had fallen into a fashion, very lately, of regarding as his wife one whom he had taken such pains should never be able to prove her relationship to him. Of very late days, he had caught himself anticipating the time when he should have found Edna, and made it up with her.

And yet, with this Oberdon Audrey in the way, he hardly hoped to have her reconciled; this man Audrey, who seemed a very spirit of

revenge, who had won his wife's affections, who had delivered Lenore Saxton from a fate she never had dreamed of. Well, even this bold, unscrupulous man of the world really thought it was the best thing that could have happened to Lenore, anyhow. She'd cry a little, doubtless, and miss a few meals, and then—marry that other suitor and settle down into a model matron.

So Ulmerstone thought, and yawned, and stretched his shapely limbs, and then his listless, roving eyes caught a glance of a bit of bright ribbon under the edge of the bureau.

It was pretty; it was gay, it was his favorite color, and he remembered once telling Edna Silvester she looked so remarkably well in this very self-same shade of pink.

She had had little dashes of pink on the night of her wedding; he especially remembered a small loop of pink satin, lined with black lace, with a tiny oval button of gold in the center; she had worn it in her hair, among—

He stooped carelessly to pick it up, and started as he saw it fully.

It was precisely the same he had been mentally recalling; lace, gold button and all.

Was it the identical article? had Edna been here—in this very room? Nothing was more possible, more natural. Had he alighted already on a clue?

He was not listless now. With the ribbon bow in his hand, he resolved to search the room as if for a lost treasure.

He ransacked the drawers, the wash-stand, the wardrobe, but no trace of any presence except that of the laundress in the shape of freshly-ironed towels, rewarded him.

Yes—there were one or two other items he saw, but they could be of no use, possibly. One was a hair-pin, another a button off a boot, another a *Herald*, rumpled, and a week old.

He sat down again in the chair, thinking earnestly. Like a flash it occurred to him—the paper; why not? some advertisement marked, perhaps that might direct him; some personal, addressed to—mayhap himself!

He eagerly searched the columns through, and all he found—or did not find—was the advertisement Edna had cut therefrom.

But, granted she left it—and it was more than likely she was the last occupant of the room, or the hair ornament would have been discovered and appropriated—it was a clue.

He copied the date on his tablets, resolved to purchase a copy of the same morning at his earliest opportunity, and then follow it up and learn what came of it.

Early the next day he sent for the required paper; and he found the missing advertisement to be for a governess, for a Mr. Carlingford's family, at a place called "Ellenwood."

He was morally sure it meant Edna. But, to further satisfy himself, he learned of the chambermaid, for the consideration of a dollar, enough to unmistakably convince him he was on the right trail.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CAUGHT FROM THE GULF.

THE train bearing Lenore Saxton and Oberdon Audrey had gone miles before Lenore broke the painfully-awkward silence; and then, with a face blanched to a frightful whiteness, as she lifted it from the marble-topped stand, she looked up at Oberdon, still standing in respectful silence, where Ulmerstone had left him.

"Mr. Audrey, will you explain it to me? Didn't you say it was *your* doing? Why did you come between us?"

Audrey had prepared himself for a perfect tempest of furious wrath, and was consequently astonished at Lenore's unnatural, almost stolid calmness. But that beneath her composed exterior there boiled a sea of fire, he knew by the occasional quiver of her blue lips, the dart from her black eyes.

He had risked all that he expected would be hurled upon him, for Lenore's own good. As he had explained, though not freely, to Ulmerstone, he had telegraphed from Newark, feeling very sure this escapade of Lenore's was an escapade of the very worst type; feeling convinced from Vivian Ulmerstone's looks that he was not a good man, and therefore, his being with Lenore Saxton, at that time, in that place, boded no good to any one.

Granted there was to be a marriage—even at the first stopping place—Audrey reasoned such a marriage would be offensive to the Saxtons, and that Lenore and her lover knew such to be the case; hence the elopement. He knew there had been no marriage; he knew the wishes of Lenore's parents regarding Mr. Carlingford's suit, and, although there was no special love between him and the Saxtons, yet he deemed it

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an imperative duty to save Lenore from the snare into which she was walking, and which was fast closing around her feet.

Thus, at the risk of making a harmless enemy of Lenore, and the greater liability he laid himself under of being hated dangerously by her lover, Mr. Audrey interfered; telegraphed in concisely plain language to Mr. Saxton, asking for instructions.

The result has been seen. Vivian Ulmerstone defrauded of his iniquitous expectation, Lenore snatched like a brand from the burning, and Oberdon Audrey the appointed guardian of the girl until the arrival of the first train from New York to Philadelphia, where Oberdon had authority from Mr. Saxton to detain her until he arrived.

And all this was what Lenore wanted to know, what she asked Audrey to explain, and which he did explain, kindly, promptly.

When he had finished, he saw a sneer on her lips.

"And you really suppose, for a moment, Mr. Audrey, that I care so little for Mr. Ulmerstone as to give him up for this?"

Oberdon answered her very gravely; he had taken a seat opposite her, where he could watch every feature of her expressive face.

"I am sure you will not regard him so highly when you take time and coolly think it all over. I assure you, Miss Saxton, no man who would entice a young girl away as this man has you, would make a good husband. Besides, what proof have you that he intended honorable marriage?"

A scarlet stain flew over her face.

"Mr. Audrey! how dare you insult me so? As if his word is not as good as gold."

Her voice rung high and loud, and at the sound of it a pained, pitiful look crept into Audrey's eyes; pain and pity for this foolish, romantic girl.

"I would not say a word to wound you, Miss Saxton, and I think you know me well enough for that. I put a plain question, and a very natural one, and my motive was to show you how very improbable it was that this man really meant all he said. If he wanted you for his wife, Miss Saxton, how easily he could have had the ceremony performed before he left the city."

Audrey spoke gently, almost tenderly, and even to Lenore, who was so averse to listening, his words carried conviction.

But she would defend him to the last.

"He did not want to be discovered; we did not dream of this—this—cruel interference, and from you."

"But, Miss Saxton, had you been his wife, for only five minutes, you need not have feared detection. As his wife, you might have defied other authority than your husband's."

Was that true? Could Vivian have known that, and, knowing—

Lenore felt the force of Audrey's quiet, strong argument, in spite of herself; she wondered; then began to doubt. And when a woman once actually doubts her lover, he may as well say good-by to her.

For miles and miles neither of them spoke. Oberdon thought it best, now that he had said what he felt he should say, to trust to any latent principle of right in Lenore to develop his friendly advice into a lesson for her welfare; and Lenore, driven into self-communion, rode on in silent sorrow, shame, wounded pride that it had ended so ingloriously, and yet recognizing vaguely within her soul, that it was better than what Audrey had intimated.

Oh! ten thousand times better than to have been caught in a snare, even if held by Vivian Ulmerstone's dear hands. Much as she loved him, implicitly as she trusted him, blindly as she had followed his guidance, and with all her wildly romantic ideas, she would never have willingly lent herself to such a crime as now began to dawn on her mind. With all her reprehensible faults, Lenore Saxton deserved some credit, and it shall not be withheld.

And yet, she was unutterably miserable, unspeakably disappointed. In a moment, at once cut off from being the wife of the man she loved, deprived forcibly and ignominiously of his society, transferred to the care of one she once had sought to enslave, and riding on to meet a justly-indignant father—what combination of circumstances could be imagined more calculated to depress her?

It was after eleven o'clock when the train reached Philadelphia, and Oberdon escorted Lenore to the ladies' waiting-room, where he provided her with a comfortable seat, and brought her a cup of coffee and a steaming oyster stew.

The next train in from New York was due at

one in the morning, and to relieve the tedium of the interval till Mr. Saxton should arrive, Oberdon bought several papers from the news-stand for her to read.

Thus, as pleasantly as circumstances admitted, Lenore and her "jailer," she mentally anathematized him, waited till her father should come.

Should she preserve the cool, half-sarcastic defiance that had characterized her interview with him only that very morning? It seemed weeks ago to Lenore, measuring the time, as she did, by the depth of her suffering. Or would it be better for her to be penitent, and meet him as a wayward child should, who is sorry and wants to be forgiven?

Lenore was looking at the subject from all sides. Was she defiant, in her very heart? and the self-forced answer was, that humbled by the untoward circumstances that had overwhelmed her, she yearned for sympathy, though she knew she would not get it. And yet, a real kind word would have sufficed.

She asked herself if she was penitent? if she loved Vivian Ulmerstone, how could she be sorry that she had given up all things for him? and was it within the range of possibility that a love so strong, so devoted, could die so soon?

No, she was not sorry that she had loved him—that she still loved him; she would not regret that. But—but—and a little shiver of pain thrilled her—she was glad if she had been saved by Oberdon Audrey; she did repent that she had been so bitterly mistaken.

To think he had deceived her! But, had he deceived her? how did Audrey know—and then she felt herself forced to adopt his argument, even though it gave her such a heart-wrenching pain.

Taking it all and in all, she was anxious to see her father, whose very presence would be such a strong, stanch protection; and she inly decided to be governed by his greeting to her.

She heard the train steam in, and saw the thronging crowd of bustling passengers, and she heard, after a moment, her father's voice, in low, quick tones, as he addressed Audrey, just beside the door.

"Lenore is here safe?"

"Here, and safe," Audrey returned, cheerily.

"Thank God! My boy, I'll never forget your kindness, never."

His agitated voice touched Lenore; she forgot his harshness, his sternness; in her utter loneliness, her wild, doubting fears, her sudden cutting off from the supports she had leaned so fondly on, his familiar tones sounded like a burst of music.

She sprang from her chair to meet him, with hands outstretched.

"Papa! oh, papa!"

He caught her almost fiercely, and kissed her.

"You naughty girl!"

But the reproof was not very severe, and Lenore knew she was forgiven.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE NEW TROTH.

SOMEWHAT to the surprise both of Lenore and Mr. Audrey, Mr. Saxton expressed his determination of returning to New York by the first train; but both Lenore and Mr. Saxton only knew the reason, which it was not necessary to explain even to the friend who had proved himself so serviceable.

Mr. Saxton was determined as ever that Lenore should accept Mr. Carlingford; he had himself given his written consent, and intended, in the face of Lenore's attempt to frustrate his design, to make her final obedience the price of pardon. He had told her so, plainly, the few moments they had privately, promenading the gloomy waiting-room. He assured her Ulmerstone was a villain, an adventurer, who never meant marrying her; else why his disposition to wait until at Washington? He told her both himself and her mother were ready and anxious to forgive and forget—on these terms, and these terms only. That no one in all the wide world would be the wiser regarding her inglorious escapade, and Mr. Audrey was too much a gentleman to bruit it about. That if she refused to agree to see Mr. Carlingford that morning, and refused to accept him suitably, in a manner with which his fastidious taste could find no possible fault, which should give rise to not the faintest shadow of a suspicion—then, Mr. Saxton discarded her forever. Unless she gave him her word, then and there, to do as he required, then and there he would wash his hands of her forever; then and there, at that lonely midnight hour, at a railroad depot, a stranger in a strange city, he would leave her there to herself.

Strange as it seemed, parental as it sound-

ed, horrible as it was, Lenore knew he meant every word he said. She knew almost as strong as life, certainly stronger than love, was Mr. Saxton's determination to marry her to Mr. Carlingford. She was weary, heart-sick, heart-sore; deserted by the only love on earth she cared for, and realizing, so keenly, her situation; with golden promises on one side, luring her to a destiny that, while she compared it unfavorably in love's light, yet charmed her, almost unconsciously, when she viewed it dispassionately, reasonably; on the other side, vague horror, vague fear, vague thankfulness. She was torn with conflicting emotions. She knew she did not love Mr. Carlingford; she wondered if it were possible she could care for Vivian Ulmerstone, when both her father and Mr. Audrey described him, without any collusion, such an undeserving rascal, and when she herself was somehow bound to look at his conduct in the same lights presented her. Of two opinions she was confident; with two ends in view she resolved to act. The one opinion was, there was nothing repulsive in the idea of accepting Mr. Carlingford as her betrothed lover. He was a man any woman might have been proud to win, and had not Ulmerstone taken previous possession of her affections, Lenore told herself she very probably would have loved this grand, splendid man.

But, with these distinct views concerning Mr. Carlingford, and directly on the back of all that Vivian had done—or rather had not done—in opposition to all that had been said in his disfavor, Lenore felt, deeply, that she loved him; she realized that his hold on her had been too strong, too powerful for her to throw lightly off; and, no matter how he had acted, or how wicked his purposes had been, she had been honorable, she had been loyal.

Such were her decisions regarding the disposal of her affections; the way in which she should bestow them, for good and all—the ends she had in view when her plans should have matured were these:

In consideration of her unpleasant position; the threats if she continued self-willed; the advantage to be gained in one way if she yielded, induced her to decide to agree fully to Mr. Saxton's prescribed code of action, with one additional favor—that the marriage might not occur within three months.

To this Mr. Saxton concurred joyfully; three months' time was short enough to prepare a Madison avenue belle for her wedding with one of the wealthiest and most influential of New York's retired business men.

That point decided and secured, Lenore had nothing more to say; all that was left her for consolation was the other end she had in view, the mental reservation that if, during the three months of probation, she heard from Vivian Ulmerstone, of his unabated love, his undying loyalty—if he made her, and insisted on the immediate solemnization of, an offer of marriage, she would accept him, and throw Mr. Carlingford, be the results what they would.

Not a very laudable reservation, nor very truthful, Lenore admitted bitterly; but under the circumstances the best she was capable of. And with a still more bitter soul, she wished she would learn that Ulmerstone was true. It was a trying thing for her to have to doubt him; and the doubt, although she did not know it, was parent to the decrease of love.

The ride home again, alone with her father, after they had bidden Mr. Audrey good-by, was more cheery than Lenore thought could have been possible. But Mr. Saxton, having accomplished his double purpose, that of rescuing his daughter from Ulmerstone's hands, and pledging her word to be Carlingford's bride, was overflowing with quiet jollity, and his infectious, satisfied delight more than once made Lenore smile.

At home, Mrs. Saxton received them in her dressing-room by gaslight, with a dainty breakfast waiting on a little gas-stove, and Lenore's wrapper and slippers ready for the traveler.

Lenore had braved herself for one, at least, sneer; but to her satisfaction, Mrs. Saxton met her as coolly as if she was belated from the opera.

"Lenore, dear, come by the fire. Are you not ready to perish from the cold?"

That was all; and it was enough. Mrs. Saxton knew it was suitably arranged, and Lenore knew her subjection was supposed to be complete. And it was—unless Ulmerstone came to her rescue; if he loved her, he would. If no word came, then she would know it was all true of him.

Lenore laid aside her wraps, and sipped the chocolate, and ate the hot French bread, and then retired to her room to catch a nap to be fresh and blooming at nine o'clock.



"Fresh and blooming!" Lenore wondered if she ever would be that again; she thought, as she crossed the threshold of her elegant room, how different her return was to what she had pictured it; how vastly altered her return from her going out. Her cheeks were fairly scarlet with shame; big tears, drawn from the wells of mortified, outraged pride, no less than the fountain of wounded love, stood in her eyes as she looked at the piteous traces of her preparation and flight not twelve hours before.

On the dressing-case lay a hair-pin—she remembered how she had originally intended to fasten a curl a trifle higher, and desisted in the act, recalling a remark from her lover, that she became so well a low coiffure.

She saw, through misty tears, a tiny scarlet bow, discarded, lest by its varied beauty in her dark hair, she might attract notice that would be distasteful to her lover; and now—now—he for whom she had dared all things, was as widely parted from her as earth and sky!

Womanlike, and tired, and discouraged, Lenore threw herself on the outside of the bed, and gave herself up to the luxury of a good cry, in which all her feelings found copious vent, and which relieved and even lightened her burden.

Ulmerstone *would* write! She knew it, she felt it, and in the meantime she would not carry a long face and have no enjoyment. She would have a good flirtation with Mr. Carlingford, she would do this, and that, and the other, all the while waiting, watching, hoping.

So this singular girl reasoned; this girl whose faults were so glaring, whose bottommost principles alone redeemed, in some light measure, her grievous errors.

The full light of the winter's morning fell athwart her bed when she arose, undressed, took her customary bath and prepared a bewitching morning toilette in which to receive Mr. Carlingford.

The early breakfast at half-past eight was partaken of as usual. By no word, or sign, or slightest reminder was Lenore made to remember what she was not likely ever to forget.

Mr. Saxton sipped his coffee and ate his broiled quail on toast with a tranquillity that was beautiful to behold, speaking occasionally of the desirability of Ellenwood as a residence, and the improvements, where such were possible, that the owner contemplated making.

Mrs. Saxton, while she utterly ignored the faintest hint of actual affairs, arranged with Lenore for a long, delightful shopping tour at noon; especially to look at the set of rubies Lenore had admired in vain, at Jewel's.

Lenore was secretly amused at the diplomacy of her parents; but she never signified aught but grateful satisfaction at their kindness; and ate her toasted cheese and tomato-sauce with quiet relish.

Breakfast over, Mr. Saxton adjourned to his library, and Mrs. Saxton retired to her house-keeping accounts, that so conveniently needed attention at suitable times.

To Lenore was left the task—the privilege she was supposed to consider it—of receiving and disposing of Mr. Carlingford. Not that there could have existed in his mind any possible doubt of his fate, since Mr. Saxton had signified his consent; but, of course, the ratification of her father's wishes by Lenore herself would be very pleasant.

Yes, Lenore determined it *should* be pleasant. Her share of this business should be the perfect semblance of maidenly demeanor; Mr. Carlingford should never dream that what he got in return for his devotion was the ashes of a hope deferred of another.

So Lenore, in a black silk wrapper, trimmed with palest blue velvet, with a tiny blue bow in her jetty hair, sat down with idly-folded hands to await "his" coming.

He came just at nine. Lenore heard the quick, manly tread, the cheerful, bold voice at the door; her heart gave a strange throb of jealous rage as she thrust away a thought of another's reception, and then—she arose gracefully from her low divan beside the register, and went half-timidly, half-hurriedly, across the carpet to meet him. He had extended his hands the moment he crossed the threshold; his splendid face lit up with a glow far too worthy its object; he took her hands in one of his, warm, quivering with healthful vitality, and passed the other arm around her slender waist.

She raised her dark eyes to his a second; he bent his face with mute, solemn questioning toward her; then, as if seeing all he looked for in the dainty, radiant features, he drew her closely to him and kissed her mouth.

"My own darling! How could I ever have doubted you were so entirely mine?"

Lenore averted her face. How could he be so blind, she asked herself; then thought how strange she never had seen such intensity in his eyes; what *splendid* eyes he had!

And so he took her; he, so grand, so good; she, so utterly unworthy, who was destined to lead him down to such dark wastes of waters.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE CLOSING OF THE COILS.

THE days of Lenore's self-appointed probation came and went with what seemed to her, incredible swiftness. The costly cluster diamond ring on her forefinger had told its story to those whom Mrs. Saxton had not told, and congratulations were forever on the tapis, plentifully intermingled with visits from Mr. Carlingford, who brought messages of love from his sister, of childish regard from the children, of polite respect from the resident governess, Miss Vandeleur.

Lenore should have been happy. She admitted to herself that, kind as every one was, attentive and thoughtfully considerate as Mr. Carlingford was, it was worse than ungrateful in her not to attempt, at least, a reciprocity of feeling. She had learned of many admirable traits in her lover's character; she found him to be very far above her ideal, so that at times his superiority of worth was almost painful to contemplate. Under other circumstances, than the foolishly morbid determination to be true to Vivian Ulmerstone, Lenore could not have helped giving the whole love of her heart to Mr. Carlingford, and by so doing, and thus raising her standard so far beyond its ordinary level, she would have made, or been made, a better woman, with such a one as Mr. Carlingford in sympathy with her.

But she would not love him because of her foolish adherence to her idea that Vivian was not the base, false man his conduct and his silence proved him to be, for out of the three months she gave herself, two had flown on, and brought no tidings of her derelict suitor.

She had become discouraged; she had very gradually arrived at the mournful conclusion that he *was* a deceiver; she had given up all hopes of him, even when she went regularly every day and inquired for a drop-letter for "Jessica"—thinking he would prefer the old name, for various reasons. She had fully as slowly come to regard Mr. Carlingford as actually to be her husband—simply because Vivian would not let her be his wife; while relatives, friends and lover dreamed on in blissful ignorance that Lenore was not perfectly content.

So the winter, with its merrymaking at the Christmas-tide, and its social jollity at the New Year, and its sleighing-parties, and dancing-parties and skating-parties wore on and away, and melted into the very lap of early spring; and still in forlorn misery that one word would have altered, Lenore lived on and on, until—

It came one bleak, gloomy morning, when the avenue was sheeted with glairy ice, and the frozen rain beat stingingly in luckless pedestrians' faces.

It came—a letter addressed in Vivian Ulmerstone's well-known handwriting, that made her heart leap to her throat as she almost snatched it from Mike's salver, and flew to her room.

She sat down to regain some composure before she opened it. Was it redemption for her, or—slavery? Whichever, it was *his* hand who signed the warrant. She never would forget that.

After several minutes she summoned courage to read it, and she read this:

"MY DEAREST LENORE—Have you been wondering, and watching, and waiting? I have been fighting and trying to conquer all these weeks, and the victory I have achieved is—to write a farewell word to her who is nearest and dearest, who once was—

"My darling, you never will see me again. Beyond the signature of this letter, you never will hear of me again. I shall hide my diminished head, while you, whom I ever shall love better than life, will forget me when you are the wife of another.

"I do not reproach you—how can I? You will not censure me that I sever all ties between us, when I think of you being the wife of any one not me!

"But, the past is irreclaimable, the future utterly out of our hands. Only the present is ours—mine, to do with, and I use it in writing this short, incoherent good-by and a blessing from

"Yours, ever and only,

"VIVIAN."

And Lenore, poor, erring child, cried till her

head ached over his soft effusions; and she believed every syllable that came from his ready pen as truly as she had loved and trusted the words from his oily tongue.

But it was only the topmost stone in the sarcophagus she had been building, for nearly three months aback, for her wounded love; and now, when she read the "good-by forever," it was the suitable death-knell, she thought, that corresponded with the wild, weird day.

After that, she plunged almost madly into the inevitable whirl of gayeties that celebrated her last maiden days. After that, she cared more to talk seriously with her lover, and hear all about Ellenwood, and Miss Carlingford, and the beautiful twins, and their stately governess.

It pleased Mr. Carlingford, this sweet, half-shy interest Lenore took, and he never tired of telling her every trivial little gossip of the home so soon to be hers.

"You will love sister Annie—every one does, and she is so anxious to greet you, my darling."

"I hope she will care for me, if only a little. And little May and June, no one has attempted to prejudice them against me. Their governess would not, would she? Miss—Miss—who is she, Mr. Carlingford?"

"Miss Vandeleur is too thoroughly a lady to inculcate such principles. I am sure her motives are to secure for you a deep hold in their hearts; and if they love you as they do her, my darling, one of you will surely be jealous."

"Jealous! of Miss Vandeleur?"

Lenore laughed scornfully, and Mr. Carlingford at once understood what she meant.

"You will find Miss Vandeleur a perfect lady, my dear. She is at once refined, educated, and very beautiful in her own way. You need have no fear regarding accepting her as a friend and companion."

A little flush came to Lenore's cheek.

"I *shall* be jealous, Mr. Carlingford, on your account, rather than the children's, unless you cease praising this paragon. The surest way to make one woman hate another is to hear her praises eternally sung."

It was Mr. Carlingford whose turn it was to crimson.

"You cannot mean I care for Miss Vandeleur as I care for you, Lenore?"

He spoke so frankly that she felt herself compelled to smile.

"Certainly not, Mr. Carlingford, only—"

"Certainly not," he repeated, quietly. "I regard Miss Vandeleur as a valuable addition to our family circle; sister Annie loves her dearly, and the little ones regard her as an elder sister. She seems to me like a daughter."

Lenore lifted her bewitching face.

"Now you want me to tell you you are not so very venerable, don't you?"

But this subject of this wonderful governess who rejoiced in the good graces of the family at Ellenwood, rather preyed on Lenore's mind, and at length she came to dislike the queenly, graceful girl, whose calm, statuesque beauty was as provoking to her to contemplate, as the sound of her patrician name—Miss Vandeleur—was to hear.

Mr. Carlingford had said, too, there was the usual little romantic mystery around her. She courteously refused their confidence, and had never even offered to tell them her Christian name; and the Carlingfords were not people to indecorously press upon such reserve. So long as Miss Vandeleur performed her duties as satisfactorily as she had been doing, and certainly not when they all respected and loved her so, would she be discharged from Ellenwood, because she was reticent on the subject of her own affairs.

Lenore felt a little thrill of contemptuous scorn as she recalled this, that she had gathered from Mr. Carlingford, from time to time; and in her heart she made up her mind that this Miss Vandeleur should never ride over her, as she seemed to have done over the others.

It would be no rapid task, nor an easy one, to dethrone Miss Vandeleur, after three months' triumphant reign at Ellenwood, but Lenore made up her mind determinedly that she *should* be uncrowned; and herself, the bride, the future head of the house, would make it her especial business to see that she was not superseded by this governess, who always wore black—Lenore at once declared, simply because it was becoming to the artful minx.

She would not declare war to the knife—not she. Her policy was very different from most people's; and her tactics those an outspoken, honest-minded woman would scarcely have approved; but they suited Lenore, because she



invented them, and could admirably carry them out.

No, she would begin with smiles and kisses, and insinuating confidences, and when she had completely wrapped the girl around her finger, fling her off, as one would a viper.

It was perfectly natural, very easy, and really gave quite a zest to the future of her life at Ellenwood; and somehow it seemed to compensate Lenore for some of her own grievances to know there was another woman who had great troubles, whom she intended to torment.

If she had known how strangely their paths crossed and recrossed! If she had only been permitted the most fleeting glimpse of what her future, and *his* future, would be, because of those crossed and recrossed paths!

But, in blind ignorance, she went up to her marriage; laid her hand in Mr. Carlingford's, and swore to be true till death did part them. In after years she remembered how mocking the solemn charge was, and how literally, awfully true it came to be; true—she true!—she who, away, away down in the sanctuary of her heart, dared marry one man and love another, philosophize as she might about it.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## FACE TO FACE.

EDNA'S three months at Ellenwood had flown by as if on enchanted pinions. In many respects she regarded them as the happiest she had ever spent, and had it not been for the hanging cloud forever over her head, she would have been care-free as a child.

She liked Ellenwood thoroughly; its appointments, its liberal hospitality, its friendly kindness; and until she had learned that Mr. Carlingford's marriage was very close at hand, and that his bride was Lenore Saxton, it had seemed to her that Ellenwood would forever be her home. Not that there was any need of her leaving now; Mr. Carlingford had positively forbade another word on the subject, with that sweet authoritative way of his that delighted Edna so. Miss Annie had begged her to let the marriage make no difference; young Mrs. Carlingford would doubtless be only too glad to have her retained, and would learn to love her as they did.

Edna smiled to think of Lenore's loving her; but she could not urge her departure against such opposition, and so she decided to remain and see if Lenore would turn her out.

She had known of Lenore's probable coming to Ellenwood as Mr. Carlingford's wife, before she had been a fortnight among them.

At first, she was stricken speechless with the knowledge that Mr. Carlingford could ever condescend to care for a girl as shallow and vain, and, in a measure, unprincipled, as she knew Lenore to be; but, incredible as it appeared to her, she found it was a fact, and she hardly knew whether to pity Mr. Carlingford or feel a contempt for him.

But when she learned, later, from his own lips, how positively good, and modest, and womanly, he believed, *knew* his betrothed to be; when she saw the hundred little silent tokens of a true attachment to his girl-bride, Edna pitied him from the depths of her woman's heart.

She longed to save him; to have him see her as she was; but it was hardly her province to appoint herself disenchanter; and so the days wore on and on, until this grandly glorious day, when Lenore had been Mr. Carlingford's bride a month, and the bridal pair were expected at Ellenwood by the next train.

The home-coming was desired to be perfectly private; only one carriage was ordered to drive the travelers the few yards from the depot to the entrance; two days later the grand reception would occur.

From the schoolroom window Edna could see the horses to the Ellenwood barouche, pawing and rearing their heads in proud impatience; and she thought of the triumph, the wonder she would see in Lenore's eyes when she recognized in Miss Vandeleur the foster-sister who had lived under the same roof so many years.

Edna had counted the cost of Lenore's coming before she decided to remain and meet her. As a natural consequence, Lenore would explain who she was, and tell the story Edna had hidden so long; and Edna preferred that Lenore should do it, rather than herself. As to the Carlingfords knowing her pitiful story, she was willing for them to do so; she had often felt it was their due, in lawful return for all their kindnesses and confidences to her.

She was sure of their sympathy; she knew that they loved her for herself, and that no

previous mistakes and misfortunes could break the friendship that existed.

She knew the Carlingfords would be astonished that she never had said she knew Miss Saxton, when her name had been so often discussed; but Edna knew they would appreciate her reticence on that point as on others. This quiet confidence of hers made her content; and she sat watching for the train, with only a sad yearning at her heart that her life, as young and healthful as Lenore's, was so widely different—the one apportioned to lonely self-reliance, perpetual self-restraint; the other, to all that was desirable and enjoyable.

There were times, and this was one, when every fiber in Edna's being cried out for Oberdon Audrey; the contemplation of Lenore's happiness with Mr. Carlingford awoke a tenderly sad envy, and forced the question—*why* was she so fated to walk such gloomy ways?

She would not give way to her consuming thoughts. She had her duties to attend to, for the reception of Mr. Carlingford. She was to see that May and June were properly attired in their white cashmere dresses, trimmed, one in pink, the other in blue; she had promised to attend to the removal of any withered flowers in the bridal-chamber, and replenish with fresh ones from the conservatory.

She threw off her spiritless languor, with an effort, and with a woman's pardonable pride, paused before the little glass to take a critical survey of her toilet.

She saw a tall, graceful girl, whose slender, faultless figure was well dressed in a black silk of rich elegance, whose dainty laces and queenly train lent a genuine style to her toilet; whose dark-gray eyes, with their heavy lashes and jetty, curving eyebrows, were in odd, picturesque contrast to the marble-white face, with its scarlet lips—the only dash of vivid color about her; whose small, proud head, with its coils of glossy hair, its one long, thick, half-curved tress trailing below her waist, set firmly on her round, white throat.

She saw that she looked well, and she experienced a thrill of pride that it was so.

She looked in at the nursery, and saw that Bessie, the maid, was performing her toilet duties satisfactorily; then went into the magnificently-appointed apartment Mr. Carlingford had arranged for his bride.

It was hung in dainty, creamy white silk, with silver fringe, over a light blue damask, and Edna realized how like a queen Lenore could feel as she entered this saloon, royal in its elegance and costliness.

The flowers, late plucked, were still fresh and fragrant; there was not a yellowing leaf or a loosening petal to remove, and Edna knew the next act she performed would be to greet the bride.

She had heard the whistle of the engine several minutes before; then the hasty roll of the carriage wheels; and now she knew Mr. Carlingford and his bride were within, judging from the monotonous flow of conversational murmur.

Should she go down, or wait till she should be sent for, like the rest of the servants, to pay her respects to the new mistress?

Yes, she would wait, she decided, a little scornfully. She would not exceed her prerogative; she was a hired servant, and Lenore Carlingford should not find her ashamed of herself or of her position.

She had only a few minutes to wait. Bessie, the nursery maid, had taken the children down, several minutes before, and now returned with Mr. Carlingford's respects, and would she be so kind as to come down?

Very slowly, calmly, without a ruffle on her silent, grave face, or a faster motion of her heart, Edna went down, and into the drawing-room, where Miss Anna was waiting at the door.

Mr. Carlingford crossed the floor to meet and welcome her. He shook her hand warmly, and smiled at her earnest, low, congratulatory words. Then he drew her disengaged arm through his, and thus convoyed, she went up to Lenore, who arose, half languidly, without raising her eyes.

"Miss Vandeleur, my dear. Mrs. Carlingford."

Lenore made a tiny bow, and Edna extended her hand.

"Mrs. Carlingford—Lenore—you have my best wishes."

Then Lenore looked hastily up; her ladylike languor vanished; and the hand with which she caressed little May's curls, paused as if she were petrified.

"Edna Silvester—I mean Mrs. Fay—you here, you?"

Edna's face flushed scarlet at the hated, lawful name.

"I am here, Mrs. Carlingford; an injured woman, who had no home until she found this."

Mr. Carlingford looked on in speechless surprise. The recognition of the two, so entirely unsuspected, the partial revealing of the secret, so sudden, so mysterious, had taken him completely aback; while Miss Anna looked from Edna to Lenore in perfect amazement.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MRS. FAY.

LENORE was the first to break the silence; and her voice was almost harsh as she realized that this was the girl she intended to crush, this the girl who had won Ellenwood in three months.

"I cannot trace any analogy between Miss Vandeleur, the governess of my husband's children, and the wife of Garnett Fay, who left him within an hour of the ceremony."

Edna's head was slightly bowed while Lenore spoke. Now, she raised it, in grave dignity.

"Because in the seventeen years I lived under your father's roof, endured simply because I was a beloved adopted child of his dead wife, you never knew that my middle name was Vandeleur—Edna Vandeleur Silvester."

Her simple explanation was a relief, even to Mr. Carlingford, who had felt unpleasantly at the curious aspect affairs suddenly assumed. He turned to Edna with a pitying sympathy in his face.

"My poor child, we feel you have more claim on our love than ever. I had long ago heard of my wife's family misfortune, but never for a moment supposed *you* were the one. Lenore, my darling, assure Miss Van—no, Miss Ed—and yet, hardly miss; we will call her Edna, may we? Please tell Edna, my dear, how we sympathize with her."

He stooped and kissed his little ones, and then asked them and "Auntie Annie" to come and examine sundry tempting packages he had carried to the library.

It was a delicate management of the affair, this leaving Edna and Lenore together to settle their explanations, and as Edna saw him depart, she thought how more than good he was.

While Lenore had revolved the subject in her mind with her usual impulsive rapidity, she saw that her husband fully expected her and Edna to be friends, even as he had hoped she and Miss Vandeleur would have been. She recognized the position Edna had gained in the family, exactly as she had pictured Miss Vandeleur's situation, but there was not this jealous dislike of "only Edna" that there had been of the "beautiful, statuesque girl;" to Lenore she was only Edna, and never could be more. Besides, she rather liked Edna, in spite of their girlish antipathies; it would be lonely at Ellenwood until she grew accustomed to suburban life, and Edna would really be a comfort to her.

Again, she scented the romance with a relish; this romantic history of Edna's that she knew Edna would some day tell her; she knew, too, that in Edna's ears she might some day pour her own sad story, and thus sympathize with, and comfort each other—these women whose life interest centered on one man; whom one hated, whom one loved! In a second, with her quick intuition, Lenore decided on this course; and the moment they were alone she reached out her hands to Edna.

"Edna, sister! Mr. Carlingford is right; we do love you, and sympathize deeply. I was so taken aback, so completely surprised, that I hardly knew what I said. You will forgive me, Edna, and please love me a little."

She spoke in her sweetest tone; Edna listened gravely, wondering what great change had come over Lenore, that she was so mild, so gentle; and little faith as she had in the inexplicable change, she was not one who could resist it.

"Lenore, I have nothing to forgive. I have had everything to endure, and I have learned to take gratefully any kindness offered me."

"I wouldn't have you leave me, leave Ellenwood, for any thing. I wouldn't have dreaded coming half as much had I expected to see a familiar face."

"Dreaded coming to Ellenwood!" and when Mr. Carlingford was with her, and it was her home, her very own, for all her life! It seemed an equivalent to saying she dreaded being with her husband, and that certainly meant Lenore did not love him.

Edna had repeated Lenore's words in an inaudible tone of voice that made her blush uneasily.

"Don't put too much stress on my language, or misconstrue my meaning, I beg," she said.



laughingly. "I dare say I shall like it well enough when I get used to it. Suppose you show me my room?"

Together they ascended the stairs, covered with a pile of velvet, so deep, it seemed like walking on heaps of moss; through long, wide corridors, with some rare statuette in every niche; past huge windows, whose tinted panes made gorgeous shadows on the floor as the sunshine glinted through.

Lenore admired everything with a languid, listless politeness that was a new trait in her character; and even the splendid silver and cream bedroom suite elicited nothing beyond a raising of her eyebrows, and a murmurous little expression of satisfaction.

Yes, Edna knew there had come a great change over Lenore; her actions, her peculiar admission, her odd offer of friendship to herself, all told Edna that Lenore Carlingford was very, very different from Lenore Saxton.

What was the cause of this alteration in a disposition so exuberant, piquant, independent? Surely the married life of a month had not so toned her down; certainly the fatigue and excitement of a four-weeks' traveling tour could not account for it; and above all, Edna knew Lenore was not disappointed in Mr. Carlingford, for the simple reason that he was not the man to come short of any expectations placed upon him.

So Edna found herself thrown almost violently back upon a suspicion that had rushed over her the moment Lenore remarked she had dreaded coming to Ellenwood, as the only reason she could give to account for Lenore's curious views and actions.

And the ugly suspicion that had occurred to her was—the remembrance of a stranger Lenore had hinted of dimly, months ago; a gentleman correspondent, whose advertisement she intended answering at some future time.

It was barely possible, Edna thought, that Lenore had become acquainted with, and fallen in love with, some such stranger, and as a natural consequence, felt the disappointment very keenly when compelled to marry Mr. Carlingford.

But all this was only a suspicion, and Edna felt she had no right to harbor it. If Lenore had any trouble, and chose to tell Edna, she would accept the confidence and try to lighten the burden.

She left Mrs. Carlingford in her room, and went up the stairs to her own.

That evening was passed in quiet rest around the fires, and the next day Mr. Carlingford occupied in literally introducing Ellenwood to its mistress; showing her its beauties, its conveniences, its comforts.

The day after was one of bustle and pleasant excitement. That evening Ellenwood was to be thrown open to two hundred guests, and all the festivities incidental to a wedding reception were arranged for. Mr. and Mrs. Saxton came up from New York by an early afternoon train, attended by a maid and valet, with a trunk full of toilet finery.

Edna had shrunk from meeting them, with more of dislike than fear; and even when Lenore told her it would occasion no surprise to her parents to meet her, as she had written and told them the evening of her arrival, Edna wished herself permitted to avoid them during their brief stay.

Of course such a proceeding could not be thought of for a moment. When Mr. Saxton and his wife came she must meet them, speak to them, and—it was one sweetly bitter drop in the cup of dissatisfaction—perhaps hear of Oberdon Audrey, his whereabouts, his condition. She had not dared inquire of Lenore; but, she could bravely ask Mrs. Saxton, who knew they two had always been such good friends; never knowing that Oberdon had told the Saxtons how he loved her, how her marriage had crushed him to earth.

This faint hope of learning a whisper from Oberdon lent a delicate tinge of rare color to her face, and made her very fair to see, as, in her trained silken dress, of lustrous black, relieved by a bow and long ends of pale china-blue ribbon at her throat, she moved through the grand old house with her watchful step, seeing that all things were in readiness.

She met Mr. and Mrs. Saxton in the same quiet, though more reserved manner, that she had shown toward Lenore. It was not until the customary gathering of the family and guests in the drawing-room, for a half-hour previous to dinner, that she saw them.

Then she only bowed to Mrs. Saxton, who stood nearest the door as she entered.

"I was quite surprised, Mrs. Fay, to learn of

your presence at Ellenwood, under such very singular circumstances. However, I am very sorry for you."

Edna could hardly repress the curl on her lip; she could not at all diminish the blush that surged over cheek and brow at the half-contemptuously-uttered name.

"Thanks, Mrs. Saxton, for your very kind and certainly unexpected sympathy. But to prevent future mistakes, please remember I do not, for obvious reasons, respond to the name you gave me."

Mrs. Saxton raised her eyebrows with a calm incredulity that almost crazed Edna.

"Indeed? At the same time you can not deny any one's right to address you by your name—whether you respond or not, Mrs. Fay."

She added the last two words with maliciously elaborate politeness. Edna flushed, and turned abruptly away, to come counter to Mr. Saxton as he was crossing the room.

He paused, nodded, then—it seemed to Edna so—made up his mind to do what he had previously decided not to do—recognize and speak to her.

"Quite a curious thing, eh? How do, Edna? Glad you're so comfortable. I don't suppose you had any news from that husband of yours?"

His loud, careless tone jarred harshly on her ears; but it did not arouse that tiger of hatred in her as did Mrs. Saxton's unendurable hauteur.

She answered him, in a low, cold tone:

"I know nothing of the person you mentioned, sir. I am comfortable, very; thanks to Mr. and Miss Carlingford." Then, catching one of the twins' attention, she beckoned her.

"June, dear, you are looking for me? Am I wanted in the housekeeper's room?"

June put up her hands and drew Edna's face down among her golden curls.

"Bessie says there has been some one waiting for you in the library ten minutes. She told me to hand you the card."

Edna took it carelessly; she often had casual friendly calls, and merely wondered, as she turned her eyes to read it, who would be so singular as to call on such a day.

But she gave a little gasping cry, away down in her throat, when she read the name; her limbs tottered under her as she slipped out from the crowd to meet—

Garnett Fay!

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE WIFE'S TRIAL.

GARNETT FAY! the man of all men she most hated, feared, despised, from whom she had fled in outraged womanhood not very long ago, from whom now, as she stood leaning against the marble Neptune in the hall at the foot of the stairs, she shrunk in utter repulsiveness of dread.

Under the same roof with her; an invader of her privacy, the thief of her only comfort—her solitary retirement. How had he found her? how learned her retreat? what had he come for, what did he want?

She felt a sick, dizzy horror creep over her as she realized his power over her; that he had only to proclaim, and all the world, even Mr. Carlingford, could not assist her. She was his wife; she said it, over and over again; yes, she was his wife, and all the tears of a lifetime could not drench out the pitiful fact. She had not the slightest idea what she should do or say, or how to meet him. She seemed, after that cold thrill of horrid agony, to have been suddenly petrified; and she walked slowly, wearily up the stairs, twisting his card in her fingers in very bitterness of soul.

At the library door, she never paused to think; she pushed open the door, and walked in and met him, for the first time since their wedding hour, face to face.

He arose from the chair in which he sat with the same easy grace Edna remembered, looked steadily at her, then bowed deferentially, while Edna, with the pasteboard between her cold fingers, her face pale as death, her eyes fairly glittering with suppressed excitement, only stood mute, motionless.

"I am very sorry if I agitate you so. Sit down, Edna. You look faint."

He addressed her so coolly, so naturally, and—half-maddened her, so like a man who knew his rights. He even called her Edna.

She would not sit down; she was not ill; did he wish to see her particularly?

He smiled, pityingly, as if she were a fractious child who writhed under discipline.

"Then I must conclude you are very sorry to see me. I have looked forward to this hour with an anticipation I see cannot be realized.

Edna, you left me very unceremoniously; I followed within half an hour, and have never ceased the search night or day till I found you. And this is the welcome my wife gives me!"

His voice lowered to a mournful key that only smote her heart with new fright. He did mean to claim her then; he called her his wife.

She strove to subdue her wild repulsion; she essayed, hardly successfully, to address him:

"I cannot be your wife, Mr. Fay. The conversation I overheard, that induced me to flee, forever put a barrier between us. You did not want me, you wanted—'Jessica,' you did not want me, you wanted the money you thought I had, and learned too late I had not."

He kept his mocking blue eyes on her face while she spoke, thinking the while how wondrously lovely she had grown to be. When she ceased, he said:

"Am I to regard it as a favorable sign that you are just the least bit jealous of—"

Her eyes fairly blazed then.

"Jealous? I jealous of you? Mr. Fay, do not add insult to injury."

Her voice was clear enough now, and rung out high and sweet in its honest scorn.

He smiled almost sneeringly.

"Ten thousand pardons! I might have remembered there could be no possible room for jealousy in a heart so loyal to Mr. Audrey!"

He watched her narrowly, and his eyes gleamed with a sudden anger when he saw the swift blushes deluge her fair face, neck and hands.

"Mr. Audrey has proved himself a true friend of mine. As such I shall always regard him. Besides, he or his affairs are not possibly concerns of yours."

"No? Permit me to acquaint you with a fact of which you seem in total ignorance, that a gentleman assumes, generally, the affairs of his wife's friends as his own friends!"

Her ruddy flush vanished before the implied doom of his careless, meaning words.

"And let me acquaint you with the fact, Mr. Fay, that no gentleman would attempt to claim as his wife a woman whom he knew, in his very soul, despised him as—"

She paused, fearing to utter the words; but he coolly took up the incomplete remark.

"As you despise me, you mean, I presume, Mrs. Fay? Very well. I regret exceedingly your unfavorable opinion of me; but hope, when time and a more intimate acquaintance shall lend their aid, to have it changed."

A more intimate acquaintance! her heart almost sprung to her throat.

"You do not mean—surely you do not mean after all this time, to—to—"

She could not frame the language with her quivering lips.

"I mean, most assuredly, to offer you every opportunity in my power to enable you to return to me the affection you once gave, then withdrew. You cannot ever forget, Edna, that no power on earth can unmake the fact, to you so repellent, that you are my wife."

It was so terribly true, this that he said, with such quiet emphasis, such satisfied assurance.

"But it is not me you want," she returned, with the passionate desperation of one reduced to a last, bitter extremity; "you know it is not me you want; it is the miserable money you thought was mine; that now, when I have it, you come back to me for."

He raised his eyebrows with placid inquiry.

"Then you are the heiress, after all? I certainly am glad to find such to be true, although you cruelly mistake my motive."

Edna shivered with utter horror as she listened, not divining the triumph in his soul, that she had proved, conclusively, what he had come to Ellenwood to learn.

"I know it is the money, and only let me be in peace and never see you again, and you shall have it in welcome."

He smiled at her honest antipathy to him; a dark, boding smile.

"I cannot feel flattered by my wife's unexpected generosity. I am free to confess that, delightful as the snug little fortune would be to possess, I shall be obliged to take with it the generous donor as well!"

Edna compressed her lips till they were white with pain; her eyes grew full of anguish that gradually froze into stony defiance. She stood just in front of her husband's chair, and looked him full in the face as she answered him.

"Mr. Fay, determined as you are in your purpose to claim me and my miserable money, you will find me fully as unalterable in my decision never, under any circumstances, to live with you, to acknowledge you as more than a base deceiver, through whose unmanly conduct

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my earthly happiness is forever wrecked. I would have been a true, good wife to you; it is your own fault, and none of mine, that the chasm, never to be bridged, was opened between us; and it will be my fault, if ever I, or my money, do you or yours any good."

Her gray eyes flashed forth the truth of what she said and meant, and Garnett Fay felt her noble superiority with an added pang of mortification and impotent wrath that, if she persisted thus, he had no power to coerce her, for he had, with his own hands, flung every proof to the flames and wind.

But, he was a man of wondrous assurance; he resolved to fight gallantly, first on one line, then another, until he won the fight somehow. So he listened, secretly galled by her womanly independence, admiring her for it, and yet resolving to show no token, but bide his time patiently.

"Indeed? And in the meantime you condemn me to the forlornest of all fates—waiting for my wife to fall in love with me."

"I shall never fall in love with you," she said gravely. "Now, Mr. Fay, that we fully understand each other, I will leave you. A servant will show you the door."

She bowed, courteously, but with a certain something in her air that made Fay feel forcibly the impassable distance between them.

He arose hastily; he saw it was high time to change his tack.

"Do not go just yet, I beg. I was hoping you would ask me, or at least offer me the opportunity of telling you, how I found you."

"It can be of no interest to me. It is sufficient that I know I am found, much as I regret the annoyance it has subjected me to."

He bit his lips to keep back the words that fairly stung his tongue for utterance.

"As you please. And I will leave you at once, not as an intruder ordered from under the roof that shelters you, but as a friend who will yet prove his friendship in the hope that one day more will be accorded him. Edna, good-by. I will see you again."

He reached his hand to take hers, but she instinctively shrunk away.

"Good-by," she said, in a strange, constrained voice as he passed her; and she watched him as he walked, with his courtly, graceful tread, through the lower hall, and out the entrance into the grounds.

Her heart was throbbing with awful fear lest some one should come suddenly out of the rooms and meet him; she dreaded having people know him as being aught to her, or she to him; she would rather a thousand times suffer on and on than have had him meet her friends.

But no one came out; she heard the continued murmur of conversation in the rooms below, and he must have heard as he passed the doors; he was out of the Ellenwood gates before Edna heard the drawing-room door open, and saw Lenore, on Mr. Carlingford's arm, ascend the stairs.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### THE WIFE'S CONFESSION.

THE reception was a success. Lenore was in her brightest mood, for the few hours she was excited by the music, the dress, the attention around her, and won everybody's admiration. The following morning, like all mornings following nights of dissipation and excitement, brought with it the inevitable reaction of headache, despondency, ennui to Lenore, who, in her wrapper and slippers, had her toast and chocolate served to her at eleven in her dressing-room.

Afterward, when her parents had returned to New York, she had little May and June brought, to help while away an hour; then, tiring of them, of her new novels, of her sister-in-law and her husband, by turns, she sent a pleading little message to Edna to come bring her work, whatever she might be doing, and sit with her until dinner. The invitation found Edna just released from examining copy-books, and correcting examples; and although perhaps as weary and dispirited as Lenore, though from far different causes, she sent word that she would come to Mrs. Carlingford in a few minutes. She completed her duties in the school-room, then went to her own room, made some trifling change in her toilette by exchanging her cuffs and collars for fresh ones, and replacing her cambric apron by one of ruffled swiss; took her "work," a strip of embroidery she was making for underwear, and went down to Mrs. Carlingford's boudoir.

She found Lenore, with her hair down, her eyes dull and unutterably weary, lying on the lounge beside the window.

"You are so kind," was her greeting. "Bring the low rocking-chair, and sit here where I can see you while we talk."

Edna brought the little rocker, and sat down in front of the lounge.

"You don't seem to mind a night's frolic, do you? You look as fresh as ever. Look at me."

Edna glanced up, critically.

"You are jaded, Mrs. Carlingford, which is new for you. I remember your being up two nights once, and not—"

Lenore interrupted her with an irritation that both startled and astonished Edna.

"For mercy sake, don't allude to old times; and don't, I beg, call me Mrs. Carlingford. I tell you I hate the very sound of his name!"

The fire was springing to her eyes now, Edna saw, with a strange, tender pity at her heart for this unhappy woman, who, like herself, had a burden to carry so heavy. And yet a thrill of horror went over Edna to hear Mr. Carlingford's wife declare she hated the mention of the name he had given her.

"You do not mean that, I am sure," she said, gently. "Mr. Carlingford would be terribly grieved if he thought such could possibly be true."

"As if I care! Mr. Carlingford seems to be a paragon among you at Ellenwood. I tell you I am heart-sick of Ellenwood and every thing belonging to it. Edna! Edna! if I can't unburden myself to somebody, I shall go mad! I've never told a soul, and the load is too heavy to carry another minute."

Lenore pushed away her black hair from her flushed face; and Edna, in speechless surprise, listened and wondered.

"You don't say a word," Lenore added, half piteously, half spitefully. "I supposed you, after all you have gone through, would have a heart to sympathize with me."

The tears sprang to Edna's eyes.

"I can pity any one who has been trampled on as I have—Lenore. If my sympathy is what you want, if you have suffered—you have it freely."

"Suffered!" echoed Lenore, in a perfect wail of agony; "and the worst of it is, I can't get over it. I thought, honestly and truly, that when I married Mr. Carlingford, I would learn to forget him—but I can't! I can't!"

It was so; Lenore did love another; and Edna saw the explanation of all her strangeness of manner.

She knew she was expected to converse upon the distressing subject; she felt that she could not turn coldly away from Lenore's sobbing confession, painful, wrong that it was; and, above all, how like to her own weight of sorrow it was; so like, yet so precisely dissimilar.

Her voice was low and kind when she answered Lenore's passionate complaint.

"It is a dreadful thing to be the wife of a man you do not love. I am the wife, according to the law of our land, of a man I dislike, despise—a villain, a deceiver; you, my poor Lenore, are trebly unfortunate in not loving a husband so good, so noble as Mr. Carlingford. It is terrible for him."

"He may be good, noble, perfect, if you will. But I would rather have Vivian, with all his faults, a thousand times, because I loved him—yes, do love him so! I never can help it!"

She buried her face in her cold hands, and Edna felt the hot tears trickle on her own warm fingers that she clasped over Lenore's.

"Yes, you can help it, by God's help! you must help it, if it kills you to crush it down! You must give it up, on your knees, this unholy affection that will drag you further and further from purity and wifehood and womanhood the closer you nourish it! Oh, Lenore, remember, I have felt all this; I have struggled with a love as strong as life, as mighty as death!"

She spoke like an inspired priestess, and Lenore listened as if an oracle had spoken.

"You have? then you did love Oberdon Audrey, after all?"

Edna's face suddenly surged over with conscious blushes; she had preached as she believed was her duty to this misguided woman, who coldly turned around and threw her views in her face.

Not crossly, sneeringly, either; not unkindly, but simply with plain force.

"I did love Mr. Audrey, Lenore, I confess it humbly; and I also confess I have buried it, night and day, deeper and deeper."

"Until—" asked Lenore, inquiringly.

"Until," answered Edna, quiet now, and

very grave, "I have learned it is my destiny not to be happy as other women are happy."

"As I am happy, you ought to say," said Lenore, mockingly. "I, the mistress of Ellenwood, who would give it all for one look from Vivian Ulmerstone's dear eyes."

She was so deluded, this beautiful, reckless woman, whom her husband had brought to be a mother to his little ones, a loyal wife for himself; Edna's heart ached, beyond its habitual pain on her own account.

"We were so near married," went on Lenore; "and if it hadn't been for Mr. Audrey, I would have been Vivian's wife long before this; he stopped it, and papa took me home, and—and—I never heard from him again for so long, and then he gave me up, so nobly and self-sacrificingly."

In a broken lament, full of tearful anguish and passionate devotion, Lenore told Edna the story of her love-life; her belief that she had ceased to care for her love; her knowledge, now, that it was only the force of circumstances that deluded her into such belief; her pitiful, reprehensible love now, for the man who was not her husband.

And Edna listened, with pity and reproof, with admonition and sadness, never for a moment suspecting it was her own husband—the man she feared—who had wrought such havoc in Lenore's affections.

"He was so handsome," Lenore said, tenderly, "and so educated and refined and gentlemanly."

"And Mr. Carlingford fulfills the description to the letter," Edna said, cheerily. "Besides, Lenore—you will pardon my harshness in saying so—but from your account of your elopement, it seems to me this Mr. Ulmerstone did not mean to marry—"

Lenore almost sprang from the lounge, in her vehement speech of defense.

"You all say that! and I thought so; but it is a false insinuation, and I will never hear it again—never!"

A silence ensued after her passionate outburst, broken by herself.

"Why have you never asked me about Oberdon Audrey? Why haven't you wanted to know where he is, and what he is doing?"

"I wanted to know," answered Edna, and Lenore wondered at her quiet gravity, never knowing the wild tumult surging through her heart. "I wanted to know very much," she went on, "but I would not permit myself to ask."

"And that is part of the crushing-out process? If it is, I never shall succeed in crushing Vivian out of my heart."

"Yes; it is part of the process I have begun, and, Heaven helping me, I will finish, no matter what the end; and you, Lenore, will either conquer this unlawful, unfortunate affection, or be conquered by a terrible doom."

So they talked—these women; one so pure, so wholly high-principled, who would not deviate a step from the path of duty to purchase a life of happiness; and the other, so strangely contrasted to her; these two, whose paths so often strangely crossed, were converging now, to diverge only once again, where one led to her just recompense, the other down to depths of woe unutterable.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

#### A COMING EVENT.

IF Edna had felt it a severe cross to be entirely ignorant of the whereabouts of Oberdon Audrey, it certainly was tenfold more trying to him to have her so successfully elude him, and thus leave him in painful uncertainty regarding her condition and comfort.

It was far different, he argued with himself, the fear with which he worried about her, a lone girl, without home or friends—perhaps without money—with a husband from whom she was fleeing, probably on her track.

Edna's anxiety about him, he argued, was only a loving woman's natural solicitude for any one absent from her; he was a man, able to take care of himself, fully competent to fight the battle of life, with the bold assurance of coming off victorious.

Where she had gone, what her prospects were, were puzzles he never had solved. Her ultimate release from the marriage bonds seemed a question only of time—a time that must be indefinitely postponed so long as Edna kept herself so secretly hidden, and refused to come forward and take the necessary steps toward procuring the divorce.

Audrey had engaged a private detective, who, for three months had been diligently prov-



ing of how little value detectives are; and Audrey had discharged him, after having been positively informed the young lady was nowhere on the face of the earth.

After that, he wandered around rather aimlessly, it is true, but ever on the alert for developments that never developed.

Then, on one of his trips to Philadelphia, he had come across Vivian Ulmerstone and Lenore, effectually blocked the little game, made a life-long enemy—and went on again, hoping, fearing; now encouraged, now utterly cast down.

And all the while never a sign, a word, a whisper, of Edna, to whom he was so true—whom he loved so well.

He had received cards to Lenore Saxton's wedding, as well as to the reception at Ellenwood; but he hardly felt in the mood to make one of a joyous party; and his delicacy of feeling forbade as well, after the trying part he had been obliged to play in a precious affair of Lenore's.

So, never knowing what he missed, he had remained away, while under the very roof of the house he refused to enter, Edna was fighting her way through tears and anguish.

Now, nearly five months from the night Edna had eluded him at the Pennsylvania railroad depot, Audrey had arrived at the conclusion that no effort of his could find her; he knew Edna was aware of his place of business, and, if she chose to make herself known, there was nothing to prevent; so, with this conclusion, he settled down among his papers, and accounts, in his private office, with a grave, serious content that ought to have come to him, in the same way, long before.

He had been restless, discontented, solely on Edna's account; now, entirely on her account, was just the reverse, simply because, having tried and proved his own impotence to find her, he now rested on her pure, sound judgment to come to him whenever she felt she needed him.

Every day strengthened and deepened his love for her; every hour added to his profound respect and admiration for the way she had comported herself; and while he grew to revere and love her more and more, he grew to despise and almost hate this Garnett Fay, who blighted Edna's life and his own.

He had thought and pondered over Edna's description of him until he was sure he would have recognized him anywhere; and yet when he met Vivian Ulmerstone that night on the Washington train, no thought had been further from his mind than that Lenore Saxton's lover and Edna's husband were one and the same person.

He knew this Vivian Ulmerstone hated him; it was perfectly natural that he should; Audrey would have himself hated the man who so interfered, only that Audrey's hatred would have been more natural, because his motives could not have been impugned; and he felt himself, especially since he had had time to think of it, an antagonism to this man he could hardly account for. He did not know it was the finger of Fate stirring the deepest feelings of his heart; he was not to know then it was the man who had stepped between them that he disliked so strangely—the man who was the husband of his only darling. Since then they had never met, as Audrey had confidently expected they would meet, as the words of Ulmerstone had given him every reason to suppose.

Now another subject, trifling as air, was agitating Audrey's mind with an intensity that made him marvel, considering the unimportance of it.

It was a letter of special invitation to come to Ellenwood for a fortnight, early in June. Lenore seemed to have ignored any unfriendliness toward him in her invitation, that urged him kindly to accept it. Ellenwood would be very delightful in early summer, and he felt what a pleasant change it would be from the worry of business.

So, even while he only wondered what could possess him to want to go, he found himself deciding to accept Mrs. Carlingford's invitation, and marking it in his memorandum book, little dreaming what depended on his decision, little knowing what should happen from his visit.

Of course he had not the remotest idea that Edna was at Ellenwood; had he known, he would not have hesitated a moment in going to her.

Nor did Edna have the least suspicion that Audrey was coming to Ellenwood, and with her other troubles it was well she did not know. She would have given anything to see Oberdon, and talk with him, and yet, with her

pure, strict sense of honor, would not have sanctioned his coming to give her a year of happiness.

Lenore had not told Edna of her intention to write to Audrey to come to Ellenwood; nor, when the intention had grown to be an accomplished act, did she inform her. She wanted to note, personally, the meeting between the two, how Edna's sermons appeared when put into rigid practice.

Perhaps not a very laudable motive in begging Mr. Audrey to become her guest, nor one that Mr. Audrey would have appreciated; but, Lenore was not given either to very laudable purposes, or to care what other people might think. She knew well enough there would be as much pain as pleasure in their sudden rencontre; she knew Edna would suffer anew all she had been trying to live down, but that knowledge, instead of restraining her, added fuel to the fire of her determination to have the two meet under her roof.

She had written to her parents, as well, to join the gay party at Ellenwood; and the promise had been given for them, with Mrs. Saxton's invaluable aid and ally, Rachelle Hunt, to accept the generous invitation. So, impelled by the guiding hand of inevitable Destiny, from so many quarters were gathered the actors in the drama-emotional that had been played, that was soon to be transformed into a tragedy.

And the sun shone on; and Ellenwood lay under the bright beams, in all the fresh sweetness of blossoms and buds, greenest grasses and fairest flowers, waiting for the appointed time it could not escape, the doom it could not avert.

At Ellenwood, Edna was unrestful as much as was Lenore, who, her secret unburdened, seemed more relieved and able and willing to endure than before, while Edna, whose views knew no alteration, whose disposition was not at all fluctuating, was in a constant state of nervous horror and dread regarding the promised visit of Garnett Fay.

She had not the slightest idea whether he would come as before, and annoy no one but herself, or ride boldly to Ellenwood's chief entrance, and demand an interview with his wife.

True, he had parted from her in a very friendly, considerate way; but Edna dared not hope, therefore, he would show his considerate kindness by staying away from her. She was quite sure he would come; and coming, present what new phases of the affair?

From the evening of Mr. Carlingford's homecoming, when his bride recognized "Miss Vandeleur," and from which time the entire family had ceased calling her so, and addressing her as Edna, and "Miss Edna," she had never given them her confidence, nor asked their protection. But now, after the sudden and unexpected interview with the man she foresaw would leave no stone unturned to secure her and her possessions, she determined to inform Mr. Carlingford and Miss Annie, in the yearning hope that they might be able to save her from him; stand between her and all future misery.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE COUNCIL IN THE LIBRARY.

It was very unusual for Edna to act on the impulse of the moment, but the moment she resolved to appeal to Mr. Carlingford, it seemed to her there was not a moment to be lost.

She had arrived at her decision one evening late in May, when she sat alone in the school-room, looking out on Ellenwood that was so tranquil and fair in the gathering perfumed twilight; her books had just been laid aside, and, as usual, whenever the occupation for brains and hands was done, her thoughts reverted to herself, and all that pertained to her.

Fay would come, must come soon, for it was more than six weeks since she had seen him, since she had begun to live in a nervous dread of hearing her name called, or the door-bell ring. He would come, and in purport, all that passed between them in the first interview would have to be repeated, uselessly, for she feared Fay would never give up, and go away and leave her unmolested, and she knew she never would yield to him, or his decision.

Acting, then, on the sudden, yearning impulse to make a confidential friend and adviser of Mr. Carlingford, she laid aside her books, and went at once to his library, feeling, in her strange enthusiasm, as if Garnett Fay were at her very heels.

She found Mr. Carlingford doing as she had been, enjoying the sweet, warm dusk as it folded over the emerald lawns and wide-reaching trees, from which he turned in his customary kindly way as she half-timidly entered.

"If you are busy—if you don't wish to be disturbed," she began, but he interrupted her with his pleasant smile, and arose, and shut the door after her.

"I have been waiting weeks for this, my dear child. I knew when you were ready, confidence would be forthcoming."

She was so thankful for his assured sympathy, that she knew he felt; else, why his great kindness?

"I should have told you long ago, Mr. Carlingford; and my only reason was, the hope I indulged that, by my keeping my own counsel, all knowledge of who he is—this man who claims to be my husband, who is, I am afraid—would be lost. But, Mr. Carlingford, he has not forgotten me; he has discovered me, and—been to Ellenwood."

"Been to Ellenwood! Mr. Fay been to Ellenwood!"

Incredulous annoyance was written all over his face, and in the tones with which he repeated her words.

"He came the night of the wedding reception; he was shown into this very room, where I now sit. No one knew who he was, nor what he wanted. Only I had any words with him."

"And he said he wanted—what?"

"He desires me to acknowledge our marriage as binding upon me; he says I am his wife, and he insists upon my consenting to be regarded as such. This, you know, I never will do. He is less to me than the footman who opens your door."

Mr. Carlingford was looking at Edna very closely, with something of the puzzled look in his face she had observed the day she first met him in this very room.

"You are so like her—my sainted wife. I can not help remarking it, for, when you plead or converse unusually earnestly, you are my dead wife over again, as she was in her sunny girlhood. But I am diverging from the point under consideration; my own feelings have made me selfishly forget yours. You do not care for this man, you are sure you will not live with him, and you have good reason for your opinion?"

Edna's face flushed.

"I despise him as only one can detest who has been deceived, insulted when their back was turned, blighted for a lifetime. Under such circumstances how could I care for him? and in your estimation, do not my reasons justify me? Would you, Mr. Carlingford, want for a wife a woman whom you felt did not love you with all her soul?"

In the eagerness to support her theory, Edna had innocently put the test-question, forgetting, for the moment, what she had so often wondered if Mr. Carlingford suspected—his wife's indifference to him. But the instant the words left her lips, she regretted them bitterly; for, by the sharp, swift pallor that spread over his face at her question, no less than by his answer, she knew Mr. Carlingford had found something amiss already in his brief married life.

"God forbid a loveless union, my child. No misery on earth can equal it. If you can not give him the wifely love, the womanly subjection that makes the husband proud and happy that he was won, let him be to you and you to him as the veriest strangers that live."

His answer, unconsciously eloquent because of the home truth of what he said, affected Edna deeply, so that she attempted no reply; and so they sat silent, miserable, in that sweet, calm May gloaming.

After a moment or so, Mr. Carlingford resumed the conversation.

"Where is the proof of the marriage? who married you, and where was it done? where is your certificate?"

"I have no proofs, for Mr. Fay put the certificate in his memorandum-book, and I never thought to ask him for it."

"Then the certificate will, as you know, give him as full authority over you as a husband can have. I see no way but to buy him off, meanwhile instituting a suit for divorce on the ground of the deception practiced upon you."

It was a pitiable alternative for her, with her sweet, shy reserve, her delicacy, her retiring sensitiveness, to be dragged through the mire of a divorce court, and Mr. Carlingford noted the varying shades on her face that indicated the passing thoughts within.

"That is so like Augusta, too," he said sor-



rowfully, "I might almost fancy you were her younger sister—Heavens!"

He paused suddenly, then added the passionate exclamation that fairly startled Edna.

"What is it? what do you mean? Mr. Carlingford, you frighten me; please explain what it is."

Edna sprung from her chair, across the room, and to Mr. Carlingford's side. It was no wonder she was so agitated, for she reflected only his own emotion. He had suddenly grown pale as death, and leaned back in his chair, nerveless and stricken as by a sudden sharp blow.

Yet hardly a blow; it was only a remembrance, a sudden suggestion that was whispered mysteriously in his very soul, that staggered him so. He could not explain for several minutes, the while Edna stood, in mute, anxious wonder, at his side.

Then, when he had shaken off the weakness as suddenly as it had assailed him, he looked up in her wistful, pallid face with a smile at her anxiety.

"My dear child, you will think I am very foolish and romantic, I dare say, but you remember how we have all said how the likeness struck us when you first came to Ellenwood? how Annie and I remarked it? and how often since I have spoken of it? Just now, it occurred to me with a tremendous force that you once told me you were an adopted child—and my first-born was stolen—Edna! might it not be, just possibly be, that you are my own, my Augusta's baby?"

If Mr. Carlingford had been staggered by the idea, Edna certainly was at the boldness of his words. *She a Carlingford! she a daughter descended from an English nobleman! she, who remembered only slights and slurs, the child of the owner of Ellenwood!*

And yet, why not?

She remembered having it cast at her time and again, that she was a foundling, picked up in the streets by the first Mrs. Saxton. She knew, from the very first, Mr. Carlingford had remarked her strange, striking likeness to Lady Augusta; even Miss Annie had observed it, and one day taken her to the dead wife's portrait and compared her and it, feature by feature, only to declare it almost startled her.

But it was improbable after all, and Edna told Mr. Carlingford so.

"I presume it is," he returned, a little sadly; "only in consideration of the likeness you must be my oldest daughter and leave your affairs to be guided by me. As to buying off this rascal of a husband with your little fifty-thousand-dollar fortune, it must be at once declared infeasible. Keep your money, Edna, and let me deal with this Mr. Fay; when he comes again, send for me."

Thus, though no definite plan of action was formed, Edna felt stronger and braver than she had for many days; while the strange, wild theory Mr. Carlingford had advanced regarding her parentage, set her vigorously thinking and wondering who she really was.

Up to this time Edna had never troubled herself much to learn who she was; it was enough that she knew that she was considered an usurper and intruder in the only house on which she had the slightest claim.

But now, with memory sharpened by the disposition to unravel the mystery of her childhood, Edna remembered a tiny little cross she had seen Mrs. Saxton—her Mrs. Saxton, often examine minutely, then hang on her neck for a while, and then remove and carefully put away in a little green box that had been carelessly tossed over to Edna a year or so before Mr. Saxton's second marriage. Her curiosity never having been excited to learn the supposable valueless contents of the box, it had lain locked and tied for years, in Edna's trunk, never thought of until now; and now, suddenly invested with perhaps undue importance. And the morrow would see if the box could disclose any secrets.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### TOYING WITH THE SERPENT.

To Lenore, the days at Ellenwood were as dismal as if passed in a prison. Entirely unaccustomed to suburban residence, the quiet, the absolute removal from bustle and excitement almost stagnated her nature, so ill suited for the life she had attempted to lead.

To be sure there was company, much of it; calls to make and receive; the poetry of house-keeper to enjoy, drives to take, and shopping excursions weekly to the city; but with all she was very miserable, very restless and unhappy, so that not only Mr. Carlingford learned to

know her discontent, but the rest of the family and the servants.

It was horribly mortifying to Mr. Carlingford at first; simply mortifying, for he had no idea of the true state of his wife's feelings, and believed all her troubles rose merely from an unfortunately disagreeable disposition.

But, gradually, as Lenore avoided him more and more, and plainly showed her indifference to him, the truth began to dawn on his mind that he had married a woman who did not care for him.

To a man of his peculiar temperament, ardent, enthusiastic, devoted, constant, it was a blow to learn of Lenore's coldness, far keener than many a man would have felt it; and the fact that, while Lenore was only a girl in years, and he a man whose beard was plentifully frosted, made the edge of the sorrow keener than a sword.

As yet, he had simply the one fact that he had failed to keep her girlish affection; he reproached himself for it, and strove to thrust away his heart soreness, and never let Lenore suspect he knew her indifference to him.

As yet, he had not a suspicion of what was worse than her lovelessness for him—her love for another; that horror was in reserve for him when he should be gradually fitted to bear it.

So, under the roof at Ellenwood, it seemed, were gathered little else but bruised hearts; much of pure grief, some whose cause was pitifully impure.

Lenore brooded day after day over her untoward fate; hour after hour pondered and worried over her burden, until she grew unbearably selfish and undeniably disagreeable, refusing to appear at dinner often, and again insisting on long, lonely walks at untimely hours among the parks in the grounds.

It was during one of these lonesome constitutional of hers that it happened; and it was the very night when Mr. Carlingford and Edna had been closeted in the library.

Lenore had thrown a white zephyr shawl over her head, and had wandered a long distance from the house, down in the "Cypress Walk" near the front entrance, thinking, as usual, of Vivian Ulmerstone.

She was walking slowly on, buried in reverie, when a footstep, firm, quick, familiar, startled her; a footstep she would know anywhere in the wide world.

She stood so still that the beating of her heart sounded like the muffled boom of guns, until her brain seemed bursting from her head, and her whole figure was like a rock in its silent rigidity.

The footsteps came nearer, nearer, and then, around the sharp curve of the walk, on his way to his wife, Vivian Ulmerstone came face to face with Lenore Carlingford.

She gave a glad cry of inarticulate delight and sprang to his side, his name on her lips repeated with every caressing endearment her ecstatic heart could suggest.

He was astonished, overwhelmed, nearly annihilated by her sudden appearance. That Lenore, his Jessica, had married Carlingford, of Ellenwood, had either never been made known to him, or else he had utterly abandoned all design upon her, and, therefore, that she was in his arms, clinging to him, and evidently expecting a full return of her affectionate welcome, was a somewhat awkward fact when he considered his errand to Ellenwood and who was within its walls.

Any man in the world, except Vivian Ulmerstone, would have been completely demoralized under the circumstances; any other man would either have beaten an inglorious retreat or made a consummate clown of himself. But Vivian Ulmerstone did neither; with his wonderful tact he accepted the situation as suddenly as it was offered him, leaving all explanations to the future, trusting to good luck to help him through.

To tell the truth, this inconsistent lover was not at all angry at the unexpected rencontre. After having been told by Edna, in plainest terms, her not very flattering opinion of him, it was not unpleasant, to say the least, to have this pretty little woman looking into his eyes with such fond pride, and asking him in sweetest tones, why he had been so cruel to her?

So he just bent his head, and—kissed Lenore as if they were lovers.

"I have been hunting over half creation for you, my darling," he said, and her hungry ears believed the ready lie.

"You gave me up; it was your fault, Vivian, and I waited and waited only to get that cruel letter."

Evidently, Lenore was in for a long, private conversation, and as evidently Ulmerstone in-

tended to see Edna that night, until a chance remark from Lenore caused him to abandon his project for the time, and decided to be entertained by his impromptu hostess.

"I am so thankful you came to find me to-night, of all nights, for Mr. Carlingford is so busy in the library with Edna, settling some stupid business about that horrid husband of hers. I believe Mr. C. intends to protect poor Edna—what nonsense to talk to you, isn't it, who never heard, even, of Edna Silvester?"

Ulmerstone smiled, but Lenore could not see at what; then he gave her his arm, and the two walked up and down, up and down, exchanging their wicked vows of constancy until the loud clanging of the dinner-bell called Lenore in.

"You'll come again? Come next week, and I'll meet you by the Chapel—there down by the old well, where no one can see us or hear us. Ellenwood will be full of guests then, and I can slip away easily. You'll come, Vivian?"

She had his answer, only too readily given, and then flitted in to dinner, with cheeks glowing with scarlet, and eyes shining like blazing coals.

It was the first time since she had been at Ellenwood that Edna noticed Lenore was like her old self; and on Edna's ears, into whom Lenore's story had been poured only so lately, with tears and protests, Lenore's forced high spirits, merry laugh and conscious excitement grated like harshest discords.

Mr. Carlingford observed his wife's suddenly returned girlish joyousness; but Edna saw he was as pained as surprised by it, because it was evident her husband had not anything to do with it.

Dinner was scarcely over when there came a message from Lenore to Edna to come to her room; and, instantly supposing Lenore had something to tell her regarding herself, Edna went, almost reluctantly, to hear it.

Mrs. Carlingford met her at the threshold, all a-quiver with nervous excitement.

"You are so tardy, and I could hardly wait until that dreary dinner was over to tell you. Oh, Edna, what do you think? I have seen him!"

Her voice lowered to a mellow whisper; her eyes grew misty with tenderness; her beautiful lips trembled as she spoke.

It touched Edna to the very heart's core; touched her with a strangely commingled feeling of pity and repellent disgust that Lenore Carlingford should thus permit herself such feelings, such a meeting. And Lenore saw the meaning on her mobile face.

"I suppose you will turn against me—they all have! but do you think I care? Do you not know I would give them all for an hour with my love? Edna Silvester, you have yet to learn how a woman can love!"

Edna smiled, wearily. *She yet to learn that already too well-known lesson!*

"I have yet to learn to meet a lover against whom every principle of morality and honor cry out in alarm. Lenore, I beg, I beg you will stop where you are! I can see the end from the beginning that your blinded eyes will not permit you to do. I know there must come an end to it all, when either this villainous—"

"You shall not! I will not hear him spoken of in such cowardly terms. He is all that is good and grand—as far superior to William Carlingford as you are to your husband. He loves me, and—listen, for I shall say it boldly, unblushingly—I love him with all my heart!"

Edna felt how perfectly useless it was for her to attempt to stem the flood-tide of determined willfulness; she had done what she could to save Lenore, and now—

"I shall as surely report to your husband as I live, Lenore Saxton, if you dare risk your name and honor again! If you kick me out of your doors again I will do it! I will not stand quietly by and look on and see your husband's home desecrated, his noble heart crushed, even if you have no womanly principle or desire to avoid it."

Edna's voice had risen in its sweet high key, and she looked like some Nemesis on the track of the spoiler. Lenore was hushed, momentarily abashed, by the uprising nobility of the true woman who dared place this unexpected obstacle in her path.

Then, when the silence had grown oppressive, Lenore broke it, in her contemptuous voice.

"I am not afraid of your turning eavesdropper, for you know my sanctimonious husband detests tale-telling. Besides, if you and all the world, including the afore-mentioned gentleman, were leagued against me, I would walk



by you all, and fulfill my promise to meet Vivian Ulmerstone; when, and where, to be left for you to ascertain and 'report.'"

She smiled triumphantly at Edna's horror-stricken face; then went on, more kindly:

"Don't goad me too far, Edna. I have told you what no mortal else knows. Don't return evil for good will. Let me alone; it is all I ask of you or any one."

She made Lenore no answer; but left the room, bowed almost to the dust by the burdens that piled on her shoulders.

What was her duty?

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE GUEST AT ELLENWOOD.

THE weather that ushered in that eventful week in June was as nearly perfect as weather could be. Balmiest winds, laden with perfumy sweets, tempered the pleasant warmth; bluest skies spread their triumphal arch for the royal sun to march across; opening flowers, fresh springing grasses, bursting leaves made all the country, and especially beautiful Ellenwood, a veritable fairyland.

Oberdon Audrey alighted from the railway carriage just at sunset, when the golden haze was still in the air, and birds yet chirped and twittered as they flew homeward before the dusk and the dew fell. He looked abroad, as far as he could see, over the peaceful face of Nature, and thought how far above her just deserts such a girl as Lenore Saxton had been placed to be mistress of so much grandeur and elegance.

He knew she could not appreciate it; he knew she was not the woman a man like Mr. Carlingford wanted, who could appreciate his fine qualities and give intellect for intellect. It was passing strange to him that he had ever selected her from among the many women who would have filled the position of his wife with so much more true womanliness than could ever be expected of a girl like Lenore Saxton.

He pitied Mr. Carlingford; he pitied Lenore, who, in his heart he knew did not, *could not* love her husband. He did not at all dislike Lenore; he had found her a pleasant companion enough for an hour or so, but for a lifetime—he was in no danger of envying her husband.

He knew, too, that the Saxton family had deceived Mr. Carlingford. He knew it was never hinted that Lenore was only accidentally his wife, so to speak, and that he, himself, in the effort to save a giddy girl, had been the unconscious instrument in giving her to her husband.

Mr. Audrey thus thought, while he walked from the car to the imposing gates that were wide open at the edge of the Ellenwood estate. He saw standing there, a slight, graceful figure, that, as he advanced nearer, came eagerly forth to meet him, with a pleasant smile of greeting.

"Mr. Audrey! I wondered if you would change your mind and not come, after all. I am so glad to see you, and I can promise you that Ellenwood shall be taxed to entertain you. Isn't it beautiful?"

She glanced across the far-reaching domains, and Audrey, following her look, and then returning his gaze to her face, saw not the natural glow of pride he expected, but a feverish nervousness and keen excitability that were certainly as bewitching as surprising.

He bowed, and took her cordially-extended hand.

"I can earnestly congratulate you, Mrs. Carlingford, in possessing such a beautiful home. With your estimable husband and desirable residence, there seems little to want."

Lenore darted a keen glance at him as he gravely spoke. Was he hinting at anything? was he remembering anything?

If he was doing either he gave no sign that he was conscious of it; contrarily, he seemed entirely occupied in present circumstances as they walked up the shady path.

"I am extremely anxious to meet Mr. Carlingford," Audrey went on, pleasantly, as if the world contained, and never had contained, else than her husband for Lenore.

"I have heard of him so frequently in business circles, as well as social, that I am prepared beforehand to yield him the most genuine admiration and esteem. Yes, Mrs. Carlingford, Ellenwood is an exquisite spot. New beauties unfold at every turn—that tiny Chinese mosque yonder, for instance. What is its use, Mrs. Carlingford, or is it simply ornamental?"

He paused, and pointed to the "Chapel" that Lenore had designated to Vivian Ulmerstone as their rendezvous that very week. He was not looking at her, or he would have seen the swift vanishing of her brilliant color, the glit-

tering of her black eyes; it was fortunate he did not see; they disappeared after a second of wonderful control.

"That? oh, a remarkably uninteresting place, damp as death, and dreary as the grave. I have often wondered what induced Mr. Carlingford to keep it on the estate. He says, however, he is attached to it for a reason that fairly makes my blood congeal."

"Indeed?" said Audrey, laughingly. "I am delighted to find that Ellenwood has its inevitable specter—for ghost I firmly believe you to mean."

"It is far worse than any ghost that ever walked. It is an actual corpse that is buried in the hideous place—his first wife, Lady Augusta. Very pleasant for me, isn't it?"

"Decidedly," answered Audrey, promptly. "Because if Lady Augusta were not buried there, Mrs. Lenore Carlingford obviously would not be walking here."

"She died of grief, too," Lenore went on, with a shiver; "heart-broken, because her baby was lost. Isn't it silly to die of heart-ache?"

She suddenly raised her eyes to his face; they fairly startled him with their weird brilliancy.

"People *have* died of a broken heart; but it is not worse than to live on and on with one nearly broken."

"So I think," she said, carelessly. "I fancy when I die, it will be of headache, rather than heart-ache. My head has pained me fearfully this past two days—the crown of it, and down my neck. I haven't closed my eyes for three nights. Feel my hands."

She suddenly thrust both her hands into his. He actually shrunk from the cold, clammy touch.

"Mrs. Carlingford, surely you must be ill! The moment I saw you I thought there was something amiss."

She smiled grimly.

"Yes, something is amiss; I have the horrors, I guess, on account of that charnel-house forever under my eyes. You've no idea how ridiculously nervous it makes me."

Audrey was watching her narrowly; she was amiss, surely. Her high color, that vanished so suddenly, leaving her ashen white, her glittering eyes that moved so restlessly, her nervous motions, her fluctuating gayety alternating with quiet depression, were unmistakable symptoms of a malady not far distant, either physical or mental.

Had there been another fearful blank in the grand lottery of married life? In his soul, while he pitied himself, while his heart asked for Edna, it fairly bled to see Lenore Carlingford.

At the door she dropped him a playful courtesy.

"Welcome!"

He followed her—suddenly as grave as she had been childishly elated—to the library, where he was presented to Mr. Carlingford, who recognized him at once, and in whom Audrey read at once unmistakable traces of a corroding care.

Everywhere, turn where he would, he found little but sorrow. Even at Ellenwood, where the world had contributed her choicest offerings, were grinning, gaping skeletons!

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Saxton and Rachelle Hunt arrived, and immediately dinner was ordered served, with private covers laid in the school-room for the children and Edna, who, caring so little for meeting the guests from New York, desired the retiracy of her own domains.

So she did not meet Oberdon Audrey that night; nor dream he slept under the same roof, even when she heard his footsteps pass her door at eleven that night.

And no one had told him of Edna's near presence. Mr. Carlingford, not knowing of their acquaintance, of course had never mentioned Edna's name any more than that of any stranger.

Mr. and Mrs. Saxton had received their cue from Lenore; while Rachelle, with her quick-wittedness, learned at once how the land lay.

And so, the household at Ellenwood retired to their rooms; some to sleep with a clear conscience, although burdened by a weight of woe; some to toss restlessly to and fro; and one, the mistress of it all, to walk the floor from midnight till dawn, with burning cheeks and aching head, and wild-beating heart, the only physical sensations she had felt since the night, a week ago, when she met Vivian Ulmerstone in the Cypress Walk.

To-night, during all those inexpressibly long, lonely watches, her mind seemed capable of grasping but one idea; and that was, that, be-

fore the same time next day, she would have seen Vivian again; when the clocks rung two, she thought, with a wild thrill of ecstasy, that to-day she would see him; to-day hear his dear voice, look into his dear face.

It had taken hold of her like a doom, this fascination for Vivian Ulmerstone; because she knew she was doing immeasurably wrong, the fascination was the stronger; because she could not lawfully be his, she loved him the more wildly; the more perversely turned away her face from her duty.

She never for a moment thought he would disappoint her; as surely as she knew she was a living woman, just so surely she knew that Vivian Ulmerstone would be at the appointed place, at the appointed time.

She never for a moment believed it within the range of human possibility that he could have met and loved another. She had been so true, even when she was almost forced to turn against him in thought, even while she had turned against him in act, and with her own hands built the barrier between them that now she was beating her hands so wildly against, in the hope of battering it down as easily as she had reared it.

In her restless, aimless walk up and down the dim room, whenever she neared the window, she instinctively shrunk away; for, gaze in whatever direction she might, her fascinated eyes were sure to return to the white dome of the Chinese mosque, where Vivian was to meet, by stealth, Mr. Carlingford's second wife, where the first lay, dead, pure, spotless as the marble slab that recorded her brief life, her pitiful death.

Was there a fate in it? did it mean anything that Lenore had so ignorantly chosen it for their secret meeting? Had she known, not for a thousand worlds would she have bade him go there; but now, once appointed, the tryst must be kept there, even if Lenore had learned, since, with a cold chill, of the sacred trust of the Chinese mosque.

Would she remain away for her fears' sake? Not if ten thousand ghosts blocked her way, would she cheat herself and disappoint her lover!

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### WATCHFUL EYES.

IF Mrs. Carlingford had been restless and disquieted all through those long hours of the night, Edna must have caught it from her at day-dawn, for a strange wakefulness came over her, that made a longer stay in bed impossible.

It was only five o'clock when footsteps passing her door aroused her to perfect wakefulness; and Edna, used to early rising, felt no disposition to woo the departed god again.

She arose, feeling a curious calm on her spirit that was a positive relief, and a decided change of feeling. Since the latest revelation of Lenore's, Edna had been in a constant fever of terror and dread. She had watched her as closely as she dared without exciting suspicion, and found, to her intense relief, no signs, of the vaguest kind, that Lenore meant to do anything she had said.

Now, with her mother and father under the same roof, Edna thought she might safely relax her vigilance; she was confident that for the time being, Lenore would give over any scheme she might have in her head.

So Edna felt very refreshed and relieved, when she was suddenly awakened by the sound of footsteps—Oberdon Audrey's they were, too—passing her room-door, that bright, joyous summer morning; she dressed herself, and put a light straw hat over her hair, and a fleecy shawl over her white lawn wrapper, and went almost gayly down stairs into the fresh young morning.

The dew was diamonding the short grass blades, and the scent from the roses that climbed over trellises in every available spot, made the air heavy with their rich sweets; and Edna, with a quiet joy in her heart, walked on among the winding walks, holding her skirts daintily in one hand, and secretly wondering if the fresh air were an elixir of life even to such a life-weary mortal as she sometimes was.

She had forgotten Lenore and Lenore's lover; she was not thinking of herself or Garnett Fay—only of Oberdon Audrey and his—

And then, some one came walking hastily, eagerly, behind her, and a hand was laid on her shoulder, and a voice spoke in her very ear that sent her blood pulsing madly along her veins.

"Edna, Edna! can it possibly be? You here?—is it you?"

Oberdon Audrey's glad, sweet voice it was;



his hand on her shoulder, his eyes drinking the light of love that leaped to her own.

"It is I," she said, in a low, intense tone.

"Can it be possible that you are at Ellenwood?"

"I came last night; I am Mr. Carlingford's guest. And you?"

"Am Mr. Carlingford's governess."

This brief explanation was soon given, and then a silence, full of eloquent feeling, followed.

There was so much each wanted to say, that neither would say.

It was Oberdon who spoke first.

"I have missed you so, my dar—Edna. I have hunted, near and far, and gave up in despair. I wanted you so, dearest—I mean, dear Edna; I had important business for you to attend, and there was no way to communicate with you. Oh, Edna," and Audrey's voice suddenly grew low, and intensely passionate, "how can I stand here and not call you all the love-names my heart is aching to say? how can I bear to be so near you, and not take you in my arms and kiss you?"

He reached his arms as if to clasp her, but she gently restrained him.

"Oberdon, remember your promise. You know all I feel, all I have endured. Be patient, a little longer, dear Oberdon!"

He drew a long breath and set his teeth firmly together.

"Yes, I will be patient—until I find the man I owe a debt to that I mean to pay with interest."

"He has found me, Oberdon; he has been to Ellenwood; he is coming again, and he swears I shall be his wife."

"Never! I will shoot him like the dog he is, first! He has been annoying you, then, my poor dar—Edna! it drives me mad to stand here and be obliged to converse as if we were only two tolerably good friends. Edna—send me back to New York. I shall offend you if I stay where you are, I know."

She smiled wistfully.

"I fear my courage would fail me if I attempted to send you away. It is so good to have a real, real comforter once more."

"You call me a comforter? I would be, but you won't let me. Edna, you are cruel! After months' separation you will not kiss me!"

She flushed brightly; then answered with such sweet gravity that it touched his very soul.

"Oberdon, you would despise me were I to do what I think would not be right, even for your sake."

Then, changing her manner very decidedly, she went on:

"You have seen Lenore; what is your impression?"

"That she has married one man and loves another," Audrey returned, quickly. "Poor girl! I feared when her family forced her into accepting Mr. Carlingford, she never could forget the rogue who attempted to carry her off bodily."

"I have heard of it; and, Oberdon, what can we do to save this misguided woman again? This Mr. Ulmerstone, she calls him, has been here, and she saw him. Oh, Oberdon, it is dreadful, dreadful! My soul sickens when I think of poor Mr. Carlingford."

Audrey walked on beside Edna, in thoughtful silence.

"He is an enemy of mine—this Ulmerstone, for the service I did Mr. Saxton. You say he has been here? Is he coming again?"

"I fear he is. When, I do not know. How—clandestinely, I suppose."

"Undoubtedly. Well, Edna, it seems to me it will be a thankless task to attempt to interfere. We have enough troubles of our own to carry without bothering with other people's."

"But I cannot sit down and see Lenore go on to her destruction. I will save her, if I can, if she turns me out of Ellenwood. I am not a pauper, you know."

She referred to her little legacy laughingly.

"I offered it all to Mr. Fay, but he refuses it unless I throw myself in. I shall hardly do that, and told him so, and then withdrew my offer. Mr. Carlingford assures me I have acted right, and promises to consult other lawyers than Mr. McCowan, who is sanguine of ultimate success."

"I will see Mr. Carlingford while I am here, and when we decide what is to be done, and how to go about it, we will probably arrange affairs very speedily. Had I known where you were, and been able to see you, we might have been at work long ago."

Edna went in to breakfast that morning with a braver heart than she had carried since the misfortune of her life had fallen on her. She greeted Mr. and Mrs. Saxton coolly,

gracefully, and made Lenore aghast with amazement when she smiled a good-morning to Audrey.

Had they met, already? It looked very like it, or else Edna and Audrey were consummate actors. And after all the trouble she had taken, after all her anxiety to witness their meeting, it amounted to—only that friendly smile.

Lenore was disappointed; she had somehow set her heart on seeing if these two really loved each other as she and Vivian Ulmerstone did; to see if Edna could practice the same self-restraint and self-control she preached, and that Lenore had no patience with, no belief in.

She had hoped to see the meeting, and make Edna feel that her eye was on her, watching her narrowly, ready to cast in her teeth the slightest divergence from Edna's laid-down laws.

Lenore wondered at herself, even amid her disappointment, what it was that had made her exult so vaguely over the prospect of witnessing Edna's discomfiture; she asked herself, sitting there behind the silver coffee-urn, so quiet, so tired after her night's sleeplessness, why it was she took the disappointment so to heart, so childishly.

She was conscious of a strange irritability about her; it had come with her sleeplessness, and her odd, continued headache; and she wondered if because she was not well she felt this unaccustomed hatefulness toward Edna.

Lenore knew she was not a naturally maliciously disposed person; but Edna had certainly interfered in her affairs in a manner hardly warrantable.

Tell Mr. Carlingford, indeed! a paid governess turning spy on the lady of the house! a hired servant receiving her lover—and she a married woman at that—in the face of the entire family!

Lenore's heart was throbbing wildly; she felt a dizzy sickness in her head, a faintness in her stomach. Her hand trembled strangely as she essayed to check the flow of coffee that streamed from the urn into the overflowing cup, into the saucer, on the snowy damask cloth.

She saw Edna's grave eyes watching her; she heard Edna's quick, sharp cry:

"Mrs. Carlingford is fainting!" and then—

She was on her own bed in her own room, with the soft June breezes stirring the ruffles of her pillow, and the soft afternoon sunshine falling in tremulous shadows on the carpet as it sifted in the open window through the branches of the buttonball trees, when she returned to consciousness, and saw Edna on one side the low, French bed, Rachelle Hunt on the other.

She moved uneasily as a torment of pain seized her head as if in an iron vise.

"Drink this, Mrs. Carlingford," Rachelle said, in her quiet, non-resistive tone of persuasive command; and Lenore sipped from the tiny crystal goblet that was placed at her lips, that which sent new life, it seemed to her, bounding along her veins.

"I was ill at breakfast, wasn't I? I am much better now. Help me up, Edna. Rachelle, I will dress at once."

Edna smiled, pityingly.

"You are entirely too weak, I fear. Dr. Garland has just gone, leaving strict—"

"Where is Jesmine? Send her here, and you and Rachelle go dress for dinner. I wish Jesmine at once."

Her imperious tones, her perfectly natural manner, her evident strength, had their effect; and the two went away, and sent Mrs. Carlingford's dressing-maid to her.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### KEEPING THE TRYST.

THE instant Jesmine closed the door after her, Lenore sprang up in her bed.

"Lock it, Jesmine, and bring me my hand-glass. Do I look ill? Ill!" she reiterated, bitterly, as she gazed at her flushed cheeks and glowing eyes. "They would make me lie here, when I never looked better or felt better in my life! Jesmine, lay out my Swiss suit and the light blue sash and ribbons, and the pink corals, and if anyone comes to my door, do you tell them Mrs. Carlingford is sleeping, and cannot be disturbed. Do you understand?"

The French girl's black eyes snapped.

"I comprehend, madame, most perfectly. De Madame Carlingford is better—mooch better, and only desire one leetle sleep to accomplish her recouvraiment. Monsieur de husband will be glad, ver' pleased, and not wish to intrude, and madame the invalide will sleep so long as she pleases?"

Lenore smiled delightedly.

"Exactly! and while the door is locked on the inside, I can sleep or wake as I please. And I shall not sleep, you may be sure. Jesmine, bathe my head in cologne water and brush my hair."

The girl's deft touch seemed to vitalize her, as she flitted noiselessly around obeying the imperious commands; and Lenore, with her chair drawn to the open window, watched the sun go down, and the soft summer twilight brood over fair Ellenwood.

Then, when the family were at dinner, and she knew every member of it was satisfied with the whispered message Jesmine had given as each, in turn, passing her door, paused to inquire, she ordered her maid to dress her in the white Swiss suit.

She watched every stage of her toilette with a painfully keen interest, the while glancing first out into the deepening dusk, then at the little clock on her dressing-table.

At half-past eight Mr. Carlingford tapped on her dressing-room door.

"I will see Mrs. Carlingford now, Jesmine. It is extremely foolish to keep the door locked so long."

He spoke in a tone that was, in itself, a command; Jesmine drew her face into a grimace as she listened on the inside, and looked at Lenore. Lenore smiled grimly, and shook her head emphatically.

Then Jesmine's low, purring voice answered Mr. Carlingford.

"Madame has beg me to admit not anyone; madame say she desire particularly to not be disturbed before ten. She has one refreshing slumber since she take de physic monsieur le docteur command!"

Mr. Carlingford stood a moment in mute wonder. Had Lenore so little care for him that her door was closed to him, in common with others?

It must be so, and he felt that already the iron had entered his very soul. Lenore was indifferent to him; she denied him the privilege of ministering to her, that would have been a pleasure to him.

He had not a thought of her falsity. Such a depth of contamination never once occurred to him. He did not know his wife had ever had a lover other than himself, and granted that he had known, it would never have seemed possible for her to remember him with the slightest warmth of feeling.

He walked away to his library, feeling very lonely, and exceedingly disappointed at Lenore's positive refusal.

He lighted the gas, drew a volume before him on the table, and settled down for an evening's quiet reading, feeling so little disposed for social duties, thinking, in his solitude, even while attempting to fix his mind on what was before him, of his wife, sleeping with locked doors, across the hall.

Sleeping, was she? Ah, had he but known that at that very minute she was flitting along the walks, like a spirit, in her white dress, and shawl thrown with picturesque grace over her raven dark hair, to meet her lover at the spot, to Mr. Carlingford so sacred, where his dead wife lay, of a verity sleeping!

But not, he remarked to himself, bitterly, not with a locked door between them, even if the gates of Death had long ago closed after her.

It had been a whim of his—he could not help it—but when they had laid his dead wife in the narrow vault, he wanted, in his great grief, to come often and look at the casket that held his jewel. He could not bear the thought that the door should be sealed, forever closed between them, forever shutting out the air and sunlight that she no longer needed or heeded.

And so the door of the vault still swung on its iron hinges, the spring-latch crouched in grim patience, waiting for the hand that should send it on its relentless mission; and he thought, with a bitter pang of pain, that only between him and his living wife, whom he would so have loved and indulged and cherished, were these barriers slowly, surely rearing more impassable than locked doors.

And, the while, Lenore had silently, swiftly gone on her way to her tryst, to meet, as she had dreamed, night and day, Vivian Ulmerstone.

And he had not disappointed her; he had come, with his strange versatility of temper, prepared to enjoy a stolen love-tryst with Mr. Carlingford's wife, or, if the Fates so ordained, an interview with his wife.

Certainly, though he fully intended seeing Edna again before he left the vicinity of Ellenwood, he had no objections to an occasional *rencontre* with this beautiful woman who flat-



tered him with her constancy and by her brave boldness to risk so much for his sake.

So—they met at the starlighted entrance to the "Chapel."

"Vivian! you are here?" she said, in a low, intense whisper, that penetrated the darkness where her eyes could not see.

A quick tread—a sudden kiss on her burning forehead answered her before he spoke.

"I am here, my darling. Why should I have disappointed you? But you are ill, surely. Your face burns like fire, and your hands are cold as ice."

He was chafing her trembling fingers tenderly, and looking caressingly down into her eyes, that he saw plainly enough now, accustomed to the gloom.

"Every one tells me I am ill—even you, Vivian, who should know my heart is breaking with longing for you—you! I fainted this morning at breakfast, just as Mr. Audrey—"

Vivian suddenly interrupted her.

"Audrey! Audrey here! I have good reason to remember that man, Lenore. Is it possible he is here?"

"I sent for him purposely, on Edna Fay's account—you remember hearing me tell of Edna Silvester, who was married to a Mr. Fay, with whom she will have nothing to do? Well, Mr. Audrey was Edna's suitor, and now he is only waiting to procure a divorce before he and Edna shall be married."

Vivian bit his lip to keep back what he would liked to have said when he heard his history thus repeated to him, as passing gossip.

"If the interfering rascal is at Ellenwood, he shall see me before any of us leave. He has to settle with me for robbing me of you, my dearest. To him give all the credit of your unhappiness—reserving only a little censure for yourself that you could be induced to marry Mr. C."

"Censure myself! Oh, Vivian! as if I did not wait, and wait—to get only your cruel letter. Censure myself! I need pity now, for I am so utterly miserable!"

"Pity, Lenore! if I did not pity you, and myself as well, do you think I would not tear myself away? I love you more than ever I did before—much as that was—when I know you never can be mine, when I see how our eternal separation wears upon you, my poor darling!"

He had drawn her head closely to his breast, and then they stood there, silent in the fragrant night, listening to the beating of their guilty hearts.

"What shall I do without you when you are gone? Vivian, it breaks my heart to think you will be some time where I cannot see you."

Lenore spoke with sudden ardor, and withdrew from his arms, standing before him so she could watch every motion of his face.

"It will be terrible—the grave could not part us more cruelly."

"And I wish we were both in our graves," she moaned, most piteously. "Sometimes I fear I shall go mad; sometimes, when I feel this strange, horrid distress all over me, in mind and body, and I know I am breaking my heart for love of you. I know I am going mad! At home—and what a home!—they remark on every change of manner, every shade of paleness, or unusual blush; even now, this minute, they all think I am sleeping, under the influence of the opiate the doctor left, who said I must sleep or—die! I wish I were dead!" she added, passionately, and then from her eyes the tears came in cooling torrents, and her grief—unhallowed, but none the less keen to endure—shook her slight figure like a tempest-tossed reed.

"You are ill, my darling!" Vivian said, soothingly; "you shiver; the night-air has given you a chill. Return home, and come again to-morrow night, when you will be better and stronger. I never should forgive myself if I were the means of adding to your indisposition."

She clung around his neck, and kissed his hands, his cheeks; then, as if she dared not remain a minute longer, darted suddenly away, up the dark paths—into her husband's arms!

#### CHAPTER XL.

##### THE HUSBAND'S DISCOVERY.

MR. CARLINGFORD stopped, aghast with astonishment and wonder.

"Lenore!"

It was all he said, but his tone was terrible. She felt what he meant, even amid the broiling tumult of her whirling thoughts; and as she heard his voice, and looked, half-doggedly, at him, she compared him, her jailer, to the man who possessed her heart—throbbing so suffocat-

ingly as it was that moment. What should she say—the truth?

He spoke again, but in a stern, distant way, that half-maddened her to think was her keeper's voice.

"How is it I find you here? An hour ago your maid said you were asleep."

"I—I—was asleep. I felt better when I awoke and wanted fresh air, and came out for a short turn."

He looked at her incredulously.

"Fresh air was obtainable nearer home, and in a less elaborate dress. Lenore, what does it mean? I never had a suspicion when your door was locked against me, but now—now, Lenore, there is a mystery whose dread has seized me. What does it mean?"

His grave, searching eyes were on her burning face, peering into her very soul.

"I don't know what you mean. I said I came out for air, and you refuse to credit my statement. I am not responsible if you do not choose to believe me."

His face flushed painfully.

"Would any one credit such a flimsy excuse? It grieves me to say it, but, Lenore, I believe you are not—"

"What—true to you?"

She eagerly caught his unfinished sentence and finished it in a far different manner from what he intended; finished it with the very proof of her falsity when she attempted to deny it.

Mr. Carlingford fairly groaned in agony; her suggestion, so strangely given, opened his eyes in a second.

"I would not have said it," he returned, huskily. "You are your own accuser. Where have you been? I demand an answer."

She quailed for a moment under his deep, stern eyes.

"Only to—to the Chapel, to Lady Augusta's grave."

He made a gesture of horror.

"Don't mention her name, I command! To the Mosque—alone?"

Should she lie? what need had she to deny her falsity, who was acting constantly so foul a falsehood?

And yet, if confession risked her lover's safety! and a something in her husband's eyes she never had seen before, hinted so.

Fear—not for the hideous lie she should tell to save him—but fear for his not coming again, contested a moment with the overwhelming desire to confess it, and see what her husband in his wrath would do.

Almost as she framed the morbid thought, her lips uttered the words:

"I was not alone."

"Not alone? Who was your companion?"

He raised his eyebrows, not in surprise so much as incredulity as to her forthcoming answer.

Very quietly, in a brave, indifferent way she gave him her reply, never blenching under his gaze:

"I was with Mr. Vivian Ulmerstone."

Mr. Carlingford shuddered as if stricken with mortal agony. His eyes filled with a sharp, sudden pain; he recoiled from the touch of her floating drapery.

"That man! Lenore, to think you dare pollute my house with the vile presence of the man I learned but to-night was your lover! To think my wife is so lost to all sense of womanly honor that she deceives her husband—fond fool that he is!—and steals away to meet her lover!"

She listened with an attention that was contemptuous in its respect; then retorted:

"What have I done so terrible? Is it one of the crimes in your calendar for a woman forced into a marriage repulsive to every fiber of her being, to seek comfort and congenial society with one she does love, and did, and always will?"

Her voice was fairly defiant as it rung out the doom in it.

"Repulsive! Lenore, what are you saying? what can you mean when you declare such awful things?"

He was white with the strain of anguish thus cast upon him so mercilessly.

"I mean what I say—that I never cared for you and yours as I worship a hair of his head! Do you understand me now?"

He shrank away in speechless horror; then, when he seemed to have gathered strength after the blow, he addressed her in a low, slow, terrible sort of way that sounded like the knell of Fate.

"Remember, Mrs. Carlingford, you have said to me words that never can be forgotten or forgiven. What you have done I might have passed over, but after the shameless avowal you

have made!—remember this: if again that man and yourself hold briefest communication—that man I would spurn from my feet, who has entered my home and despoiled it of what I thought was its chiefest treasure"—his voice was immeasurably contemptuous—"I shall deliberately fling you from me, as a thing disgraced, scorned, into the world from whence you came, among the pitiless people who would laugh and deride your downfall!"

He walked several steps away, as if he had indeed done with her forever; then his gentle consideration returned to him again, tempered, however, with a repellent coldness.

"You had better return to your room. The night is chilly, and you are hardly strong enough to remain longer in the heavy dew."

He hesitated a second, as if battling with himself, and then offered her his arm.

With a scornful gesture she refused it, and swept past him into the dim hall, and went up the stairs to her room, careless, now, who saw or knew her.

But no one met her. Jesmine opened her door, and fastened it after her; and then, disregarding her dainty garments, threw herself, aching in every limb, on her bed.

The maid watched and waited, uneasily, for an hour or more, and then, thinking Mrs. Carlingford had fallen asleep, crept away to her own room.

The house was still as the grave, save for the far-off sound of footsteps that paced to and fro, never pausing in their weary promenade, in the dim library, all the night through; and while Mr. Carlingford kept his somber watch, his wife lay on her bed, shivering with cold, or flushed with a dull fever, but wide-awake as if sleep were a vanished guest, and she a martyr to its absence.

Afar, in one of the wooded paths, Vivian Ulmerstone, all unconscious of the interview between husband and wife, stood against a tree trunk, lazily enjoying a cigar that he had lighted when Lenore had left him.

He had a great deal to think of, much to decide upon, and, in the cool solitude of the night he was thinking of the singular, complicated relations that existed, and in which he was so curiously implicated.

So far as Lenore Carlingford was concerned, he knew that, gratifying and entertaining as her clandestine trysts would be, there was no possible good, beyond the passing moment, to result therefrom. As the wife of a wealthy, influential citizen, she was in no danger of being eloped with again—which Vivian never thought of; while, because she was mistress of Ellenwood, there was every reason to apprehend detection, if those after-dark meetings were long continued.

So, he felt sure he would be obliged for these and other reasons—one of which was that, in very truth, he was losing his interest in the flirtation with Lenore—to put a sudden stop to them. He had made an appointment for the next night, he would keep that; and then, bid Lenore a final adieu.

Then, to bend all his energies to the task of winning Edna. He knew he could not, if it came to a desperate point, claim her; he had destroyed the very proof he now would have given any money for; but, so long as no one knew that, he intended to go on as if the certificate could be produced at a moment's notice.

And to think this puppy, Audrey, was a guest under a roof where he would not be tolerated!—to know he was, that minute, in all probability, asleep in the same house that sheltered Edna! and, above all, to know that he and Edna were only waiting until the formality of a divorce should be obtained in order to be married!

He compressed his lips underneath his blonde mustache; this fellow, this Audrey, was continually crossing his path: had already cheated him of one pleasure, and was now—he imagined how coolly sarcastic Audrey would have looked had he known Edna's husband and Lenore's lover were one and the same—only "waiting" to get rid of himself to appropriate Edna and her money to his own successful self.

It wasn't a very sweet thought; and Ulmerstone, standing under a linden, watching the dim light in Mr. Carlingford's library, wondered how he could best get even with Oberdon Audrey, whom he hated with a jealous intensity of rage.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE REVELATION OF THE CROSS.

WHEN Edna and Rachel Hunt had been peremptorily ordered from Lenore's bedside, Edna had gone directly to her room, with scarcely a look vouchsafed to Rachel, who, ever since her arrival at Ellenwood, had been endeavoring to satisfactorily account for the strangely distant manner with which Edna treated her. It will be remembered that Rachel had not the remotest idea that Edna entertained a suspicion of "Aunt Ella's" little masquerading at Sunset View; Rachel, though she was acquainted with the fact that Edna's husband and Lenore's lover were one and the same, had, as a matter of personal interest, reserved her knowledge strictly; and so, while Edna knew Rachel to be a party to the deception played on her, and while Rachel knew she was one of the two, she had no idea whatever that any one suspected, save herself and Garnett Fay.

Mrs. Carlingford's sudden and serious fainting attack at the breakfast-table, that morning, had created quite a sensation among the members of the household. Mrs. Saxton had smiled mysteriously, declared it was not serious, and that it was a very usual indisposition for young married ladies, and congratulated Mr. Carlingford, in a series of meaning whispers that he seemed neither to understand nor care for.

Lenore had been assisted to her room, and Dr. Garland sent for, who seemed to regard her illness as of little consequence, left her a harmless sleeping potion, pocketed his two dollars and went away. Throughout the day the members of the family had dropped in, one at a time, to inquire: and Edna had left her last, when the effects of the opiate were wearing off. She and Mrs. Saxton and Mr. Carlingford had remained the greater part of the day in Lenore's room, to be dismissed when Lenore awoke.

Edna had retired to her room, determined to search through her one insignificant little keepsake in a vague, forlorn sort of hope that she would alight on some relic, if ever so small, so insignificant, that would aid her in ascertaining who she was.

Not that she thought that she was Mr. Carlingford's daughter, delightful as it would be to make such a discovery; she had little expectation of finding herself much of anybody, and not much more desire. Whoever she might be, she was still in bonds; whoever she was, she only hoped one day to be Oberdon Audrey's wife.

Now for the square, dingy box, with a thin string tied crossways around it to keep on the cover, and guard its contents. She looked tenderly at the miserable little token, for it recalled the only happy time her young life had enjoyed.

She distinctly remembered how the present Mrs. Saxton, when her adopted mother was only a little while dead, had come to her, and asked her if she wanted this same box, that for years had sat on a shelf in the dead woman's closet, and how, in childish thankfulness at the nearest remembrances of one she so deeply mourned, she gladly took it and kept it for her own.

There had been nothing in it of any consequence; one or two neck-ribbons, a narrow little silver ring, battered and worn, and a little tin box, apparently empty, but soldered tightly on all sides.

She had never parted with the little box; but now she suddenly wondered if the tiny tin box had a secret, so closely was it sealed.

The idea had never occurred to her before; it hardly would have been likely to happen to any one, so forlorn and dented was the dull-looking little casket; but, somehow, as Edna, with her knife and a hammer, was slowly cutting off the lid, she began to really wonder, earnestly, what its contents were—if not emptiness.

It was not emptiness; nor yet was it anything to raise the slightest hope—and Edna smiled—drearily, we are bound to admit, and quite disappointedly, when there fell on her lap only a curiously-carved cross of white coral, with the letter "G" entwined with faint gold traces on both sides. It was nothing to her, of her, after all. Only a little love-token from her dear, dead benefactor, with her own initial "G" for Gertrude upon it. True, Edna remembered the interest Mrs. Saxton always manifested in the tiny toy, but it must have been on account of the exquisite workmanship.

Edna was just a little provoked to find herself trying to make an "A"—for Lady Augusta—of the undeniable "G," or a "W" for Mr. Carlingford's Christian name; and then, to punish herself for her presumption, resolved to wear it around her neck on a tiny gold chain she had—she disliked charms especially.

Within the box was what gratified Edna more than the possession of the cross; and yet it was only a small slip of paper, the ink on it faded with age, that barely revealed the words: "On Edna Silvester's neck when I took her. G. S." Only a line, but it told all the story of the poor girl's orphanage.

It was a clue, then, if ever she chose to follow it up. She was not disposed to do so at present, however, and when she had fastened the cross to the chain, and attached it around her fair, white throat, she put away the green box, and went down to the music-room.

On the stairs she encountered Mr. Carlingford. She had not seen him since his soul-wrenching interview with his wife, and from that encounter he was now on his way to the library again.

Edna stopped, blankly, at the awful woe on his face.

"Oh, Mr. Carlingford! Has anything happened? Mrs. Carlingford is not worse?"

He looked at her in a dazed, surprised way.

"Worse? She is worse than dead—I beg your pardon, Edna; I could not have understood you."

He looked so unutterably wretched; he seemed so crushed, somehow, and yet so gentle, so courteous, as he always was.

And Edna, with her quick perception, caught at his meaning like a lightning flash. He knew, then, his wife's baseness.

She crouched on the stair in the very depth of pity and sorrow, not daring to say a word more, not capable of going on.

"Edna"—he seemed to make an effort to speak naturally—"if you will come to the library with Mr. Audrey the first opportunity—My God! where did you get that?"

He almost clutched the white coral cross in his eager fingers; he startled Edna so she trembled violently.

"That—that cross? It is the only trinket I have. Mrs. Saxton's initial is on it."

Then, for the first time, it flashed across her mind that the "G" could not be Gertrude, for when the cross was found on the founding, it was already marked.

"Mrs. Saxton's initial!" he repeated, half vaguely. "Did her name commence with G? There are two G's on that cross, or there ought to be, if it is the one I think it is. Open it, for Heaven's sake! Let me open it."

She laid it on his hot palm, silently; was there a romance about her, after all?

He touched a little hidden spring, and the cross flew open, revealing two faces—one, a fair young girl who was Edna over again; the other, Mr. Carlingford, as he was years and years before. Edna gazed with fascinated eyes, first at the pictures, then at Mr. Carlingford, whose grand face lighted with tender delight.

"There is no room for doubt, my darling! Long ago we thought the likeness so strange, and now I know you are my own child! There is no mate to that cross, and our little one had it on when she was lost or stolen, we never knew which; nor does it matter, now that we have her back. God is good; He has given me my daughter to recompense me for the loss of her mother."

It was so natural, so commonplace, so utterly unlike what one would suppose a meeting between parent and child to be, that Edna hardly realized it.

"It is so strange! can it be true? I your child, Mr. Carlingford?"

"How can you be else? The cross is the proof; the 'G' is for my dead wife's pet name—'Gustie,'—the resemblance—what more do you ask, my daughter?"

What more, surely? Certainly not to quarrel with the first kind freak of Fate.

## CHAPTER LII.

## THE WOLF AT BAY.

IN his room at the country tavern nearest Ellenwood, where he considered it desirable he should wait until affairs assumed a less vague, more tangible form, Mr. Vivian Ulmerstone had been meditating carefully upon the propriety of attempting another visit to the house to see his wife.

He had engaged to meet Lenore that evening again, at the Chapel, and, knowing Lenore and Edna to be under the same roof, was it prudent in him to venture, and with so little hope to encourage him?

He had decided to risk the game for the candle; in other words, to risk the chance of meeting Mrs. Carlingford very awkwardly, when paying his debts to the only lady in the world entitled to, and at the same time detesting them.

However, knowing very well the strict etiquette observed in houses like Ellenwood, he knew that the callers for one member of the family were not usually interfered with by others. He would undoubtedly be shown to Edna's reception room, see her alone—he took that for granted, obviously—and would take his leave as he came.

So it was just ten in the morning, when he walked leisurely up to the front entrance, and inquired of the footman for Edna.

It must be confessed he did not feel so brave as he thought he would, when he was once in the very heart of the enemy's camp. But there he was, and he was bound to remain in his present quarters until the interview was over.

He did not dread the interview in the least; he was sitting very cosily and coolly by a shady window, when Edna entered, cold, haughty, almost indignant.

Without waiting for his greeting, she addressed him pointedly:

"Until I reached the door I had no intimation who it was that awaited me. Having learned, you will excuse me at once. I can have nothing further to say to you, whatever."

He had arisen and bowed while she spoke, in her sweet, clear tones, that cut him to the very quick. He would not let her see, however, the immense advantage she had over him.

"I beg you will not be so unkind; I assure you I came with the most pardonable motives—"

"Which will be of no avail. Any further communications can be made to my father, to whom I refer you."

Her father!—how very singular he had forgotten she had a father; or, stay—had she not distinctly told him she had no parents? What can she possibly mean?

He looked at her incredulously.

"Your father? Certainly I shall be most happy to meet any of my honored relatives by marriage."

Edna smiled at his endless audacity.

"He will scarcely appreciate the honor, I think," she said, quietly. "However, I will send for him."

She walked, with her queenly step, to the speaking-tube and addressed some one; very soon, foot-

steps approaching denoted a new presence, and then, in all his serene grandeur, his grand nobility of manner, Mr. Carlingford entered the library.

He looked at Fay—at Edna; then more severely at Fay again.

"Papa, this is the man of whom we have been speaking. His name is Garnett Fay."

Fay bit his lips furiously. He could have throttled Edna for her patronizing, one-sided presentation; but, between perfect wild amaze to realize that his wife was the daughter of the husband of the woman he was making such base love to, he managed to bow, and murmur some inaudible words of acknowledgment.

Mr. Carlingford at once drew his chair to the table, opened his ponderous memorandum-book, and looked very oppressively like business.

He turned to Edna, protectingly.

"Sit down, my daughter. I wish you to hear every word that passes. Sir," to Garnett, who seeing affairs approaching a crisis, grew bold, almost insolent, at once, "you will be seated, if you please, while we arrange a few preliminary affairs."

Garnett bowed haughtily, and seated himself disdainfully.

"You claim Edna Carlingford as your lawful wife, I understand? You were married when, where, by whom?"

"I certainly claim her as my legal wife, according to an act of marriage performed at Sunset View, on Tuesday, the eighth of November, the past autumn."

He spoke with a truthful precision that sent the blood receding from Edna's face. Garnett observed it and triumphed.

"Before I demand the proof—your marriage-certificate—I will state for your benefit, sir, that the marriage can be made null and void from the facts that at the date of the marriage, Edna Silvester was a minor in age; that she has received no support from you, directly or indirectly; that she's not and never was Edna Silvester."

Garnett felt his heart sink. Not so much at the array of facts, as at the implied hint regarding the certificate, which he knew was not forthcoming.

"And until these points are settled in a divorce-court, you will be so kind as to establish a counter-claim by producing the certificate, which, by the way, most men of honor would have consigned to their bride."

Garnett winced under the thrust.

"The certificate? really, I cannot lay my hand on it at once. It is among my papers at my hotel, safe enough. I supposed a gentleman's word was enough, especially when admitted by his wife to be true."

Mr. Carlingford smiled.

"It is not enough. Is that all you wish to see me about? Oh, come in, Mr. Audrey, of course," he added in a friendly by-play to Oberdon, who crossed the open door. "It will be no intrusion; I shall be happy to offer you a glimpse of the gentleman who claims to be my son-in-law, Mr. Garnett Fay."

As Audrey crossed the threshold Fay sprang to his feet, his eyes full of the desperate fire that is in an animal suddenly brought to bay.

Audrey paused, stared, looked in speechless astonishment at Fay, at Edna, then turning to Mr. Carlingford, in voice thick with fury, said:

"Mr. Fay you call him! I have met him before, when his name was Vivian Ulmerstone!"

The announcement was thrillingly awful. At sound of the name Mr. Carlingford sprang from his seat as if he had received an electric shock; while Edna, with a shrill cry, sat rigid as a rock, with wild eyes, and parted lips that refused to express the horror she felt.

"Vivian Ulmerstone! this man is Vivian Ulmerstone!"

Mr. Carlingford uttered the words from between his set teeth, and advanced a step nearer Ulmerstone, who cast at him an insolently defiant smile without speaking. Oberdon Audrey stood his ground, quiet, positive.

"It is the same man from whom Mrs. Carlingford was rescued—whom she called Vivian. You know the story, Mr. Carlingford; you insisted on its recital."

Mr. Carlingford stood looking at Ulmerstone with a fascination one might experience toward a rattlesnake.

"So you are the villain, double-dyed, are you?—you, the less than man, who, not content with my daughter, must needs trifle with my wife? You are Mr. Garnett Fay, alias Mr. Vivian Ulmerstone? the desecrator of all a true man holds sacred, the sneaking vagabond who hides under two names deeds too foul to endure the sunlight! My daughter," and he dropped his sarcastic tones as if by magic, as he turned to address her, "thank Heaven you have met with such a deliverance."

She was terribly excited and nervous, and clung tremulously to Mr. Carlingford's arm, while Audrey stood near her.

Garnett Fay never moved an inch from his position. He had listened with a proud smile, as though his misdemeanors were triumphs in which to glory; and now he was watching Edna and Oberdon with a dawning hatred.

"I have no doubt it is extremely pleasant for you, sir, liar and adventurer that you are, to play the lover to my wife, but—"

Mr. Carlingford interrupted him in thunder tones: "Never presume to call my daughter your wife again! and apologize at once to Mr. Audrey for the base insult you have offered him, my guest, in my house!"

Fay sneered pointedly.

"Beg his pardon? Pray, what better is he than I? Point to me the difference in my being in love with



your wife (which I admit, and boast she cares for me as well,)—or he, the scoundrel! in love with my wife!"

Mr. Carlingford caught him by the coat-collar, with the gripe of a giant, in whose hands Fay was a very infant. He shook him, as a cat shakes a mouse; then walked him across the floor, his face pale with wrath, his eyes blazing with contempt; down the stairs, through the hall, out the grand entrance, and then, with more force than feeling, down the steps, into the grounds.

Once free from the vise-like grasp under which he was so powerless, Ulmerstone—we call him so from force of habit—turned and faced Mr. Carlingford, with a perfect fury, demoniacal in its fierceness, on his pale, set features.

"Before the sun goes down, you and yours shall repent of this."

And he walked away; the man who had run nearly the full length of his rope. Before sundown!

#### CHAPTER LIII. A WILD GOOD-BY.

In perfect ignorance of the stormily exciting scene enacting in the library almost directly opposite her room door, Lenore Carlingford sat in her low rocking-chair, resting her hot head in Mrs. Saxton's hands, and wishing, waiting, watching—all for the early night shades to gather, when she could see her lover again.

She had no conversation with Mr. Carlingford since the evening before. She had met him at breakfast, and found him attentive, courteous as usual, but she was distinctly made to feel that an insurmountable barrier was grown between them, never, never to be passed.

She had retired to her room directly breakfast was over, and her mother had gone with her, both of them entirely ignorant of the direction affairs had taken; at one o'clock lunch was served in Mrs. Carlingford's room, at two o'clock Mrs. Saxton and her husband took the return train to New York, little thinking it was—

But it is best not to anticipate.

Lenore, thus left alone with Jesmine, slowly made her toilette—a black grenadine that contrasted vividly with her crimson cheeks and gloomy, flashing eyes. Jesmine knotted a gay Roman sash around her slender waist, clasped a string of gold beads around her throat, and heavy bracelets on her proud wrists. And thus arrayed, she sat down, patient to stoicism, expectant to delirious hopefulness, to wait while the hours rolled around.

And sooner far than she expected, she went forth to meet him; when she was waiting, in her forlornly patient way, a note was left with a servant for her, and no one but her.

With feverish fingers she tore it open, the dainty monogrammed envelope that bore his beloved handwriting, and read the briefest note:

"Come at once; same place; pressing importance."

There was no need of signature; no need of more definite request. In all the wide world but one human being wanted her—Vivian Ulmerstone; on all the fair face of earth there was but one spot to her—the "Chapel" near the Linden path.

"At once" she grasped her wrap, a costly Indian shawl, gorgeous as a forest in early frost-time. She wrapped it with the native grace of an Italian woman, in a fanciful fold around her queenly head, and caught it over her arm.

It was nearing dusk—it was an hour yet above the sunset, and the peaceful calm that precedes the day's decline had fallen, like a golden shadow, on the earth.

She walked down the flower-bordered paths, into the grand old park, where the statuary gleamed among the trees, where the fountains threw high in the air their thousand tiny jets, where the sunshine glinted slantwise through the leafy canopy to the close-cut turf grass beneath.

Deeper into the shadows she went, her heavy silken dress trailing its black shadow over the cool ground; nearer and nearer the spot where Lady Augusta—Edna's girl mother, wasn't it strange?—lay sleeping her last sleep; where, like a breathing portrait, handsome, graceful, noble—to her deluded vision—Vivian Ulmerstone was awaiting her.

She sprang forward with a glad cry of welcome, then started back in surprise at his haggard face, his wild eyes.

"Oh, Vivian, what has happened?"

The words trembled on her lips, but he laughed scornfully at them.

"Nothing has happened, only—I sent to bid you good-by."

"Good-by! good-by!" she gasped, with white lips.

"I must go. It is best, and you will think so, too, when I am once away. Of what avail is it that I stay? What are you to me—you, Mrs. Carlingford of Ellenwood?"

"Good-by!"

She repeated the word mechanically, as if the sound of it fascinated her, and dulled her ear to any other word.

"Does it hurt your tender heart so? I know it seems terrible to contemplate, but it must be."

He was caressing her icy-cold hands.

"And suns must rise and set, and months come and go, and life must be endured without you! Oh, Vivian, Vivian!"

She snatched his hands and pressed them to her lips, raining hot kisses on them. And he—had a mocking smile in his eyes as he thought this woman's husband had collared him that selfsame day.

"We will think of each other, my darling; and every night, when the stars come out, hold spirit in-

tercourse that shall reunite us, though oceans of space divide us. My love, it is hard to say good-by, but I must say it. You will kiss me, a last time, my darling!"

She clung to him in terror.

"So soon? You are cruel! You are so cruel! and I shall have to stay with him whom I hate—yes, hate!"

She hissed out the awful words.

Vivian smiled again; every word was sweet to him; every disloyal act, or thought, was a trophy of his triumph—poor, pitiful fool that he was!—over the man who was so infinitely above the woman he had taken for his wife.

"Am I cruel, darling? Am—"

A footstep—different footsteps, on the ground without startled the guilty lovers. Lenore grasped his sleeve with frantic imploration.

"Vivian, some one is coming! Go, quickly!—quickly! Oh, heaven, where shall you go? It is Audrey and Mr. Carlingford!"

Her voice sunk to a hoarse whisper, and she looked wildly around for a way of escape. Suddenly, while the footsteps were slowly nearing them—when they distinctly heard voices—Mr. Audrey's and her husband's—Lenore flew across the damp floor, and into a narrow recess in the wall, from which she returned in hot, breathless haste.

"Quick! hide here—they will never find you; and when they are safely away, you can make your escape. Here, down here—there is plenty of room."

She had fairly dragged him into the small chamber that led from the narrow niche in the wall. She thrust him in with her small, strong hands; pushed the door to, and then stole out through a vine-shaded window on one side the building as Mr. Audrey and Mr. Carlingford entered at the door.

#### CHAPTER LIV.

##### THE VICTIM OF THE VAULT.

THEY walked slowly in, looking about them, as they entered. Audrey with keen interest as he listened to Mr. Carlingford's explanatory remarks.

"It has been a singular freak of mine, I dare say, but I have never had the strength, the courage, to place the relentless barrier between my dead wife and myself. And you, my dear Audrey, who know all my sorrow, can realize how now I shrink the more from it."

They had walked slowly on, past the narrow door through which Ulmerstone had gone, and paused before an offset built out from the altar of the Chapel.

"The vault is small—only arranged for the accommodation of one coffin. Augusta desired it so, and I have sacredly fulfilled every wish of hers—except to spring the lock if ever I married again."

His strong voice shook with the inward agony; and Audrey saw his hand shake as he laid it on the heavy iron door of the vault that stood partly ajar.

"Will you look in? It is not so dreary a place as one would suppose."

Audrey peered in; and when his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, he could see the long, narrow coffin with its sweeping black velvet pall, the heavy silver shelves that it rested on, the crystal vase of rare flowers that had been placed there so very lately.

"My dead darling! I never knew how much I had lost till very lately. She was good to me, Audrey."

The simple pathos of the lament was infinitely touching, and Audrey felt his eyes moisten. He grasped Mr. Carlingford's hand and pressed it in silent sympathy; and the bond of affection born between them, at Lady Augusta's coffin foot, never was broken.

"I think I would close it, Mr. Carlingford," he said, very gently. "I think it rather superinduces morbid fancies; does it not? Lady Augusta sleeps the sleep that will know no difference whether her tomb is opened or sealed. May I touch the spring?"

Mr. Carlingford cast a yearning glance in the death-chamber; then shook his head slowly.

"I can't let you do it, now, Audrey. But if you will come here alone, any time when I know nothing of it, you may—spring the lock. I will explain its action."

He pushed the door further open; a severe task, even for so strong a man.

"You see how massive it is—double thickness of heavy riveted iron. The bolt is held back by a marvelously contrived apparatus, almost magical in its workmanship, that needs only the pressure of an infant's finger to shoot it into its socket, firm, fast forever. No human ingenuity could ever pick such a lock."

"You have kindly sacrificed your feelings to my deep curiosity, Mr. Carlingford, and now let us return. When you are away, I shall come back and close the door. It is not well to keep open for visitation even your wife's grave."

They went on out, utterly unconscious of the close proximity of Vivian Ulmerstone, who had heard every word, with increasing hatred.

Now, when he stole cautiously out, his face looked like a demon's in its horrid malignity of expression as he walked across the narrow intervening space and examined with acute scrutiny the magic lock on the vault door.

Satisfied with his examination, he returned to the hiding-place Lenore had shown him; closed the door, and, with the glitter in his eyes deepening to a fiendish flame, waited—

For Oberdon Audrey to come; for his intensely-hated enemy to come, for his rival, who had ridden rough-shod over him.

It was a devilish suggestion, born of Oberdon's own words; and Vivian Ulmerstone was the man to execute the suggestion.

He did not tremble or falter while he waited for

his victim to return, who, instead of mercifully closing Lady Augusta's grave door, was to be mercilessly shut in alive with her!

Yes, he would do it—bury Oberdon Audrey alive! snatch Edna's happiness in his hands and crush it under his grasp. Had he not sworn that Mr. Carlingford would rue his touch on him before the sun went down? and would not this be a terribly glorious, as well as wonderfully unexpected, revenge?

So he waited, waited, while the close heat of the room made the perspiration stream down his flushed, excited face, and dampen his dainty white hands.

He smiled grimly as he took out his handkerchief—a snow-white square of finest linen, perfumed with a faint odor of wood-violet, and bearing his name in full in one corner—and thought it would never do to let a drop of the moisture remain on the hands that must touch the spring; for a drop might mar the perfect working of the magic bolt.

So he carefully dried his hands, and then—

He was sure he had heard gently-falling footsteps pass his hiding-place; he held his breath and listened; all was still, and surely Oberdon Audrey was within the charnel-house, perhaps arranging, with kindly thought and consideration, the sweeping folds of sable velvet, and the flowers that never again would see the sunlight.

He stepped noiselessly from his closet-like retreat, wiping the sweat that now lay in clammy drops on forehead, neck and hands; it was well to be certain—dead sure!—that his prey was safely caged before the awful clang of the door should ring Oberdon Audrey's living death!

He pushed the fatal swinging-door off its balancing spot—he wanted it ready to obey at an instant's notice; he dropped on his knees, and peeped cautiously in; he was sure—yes—no, the wind never would have swayed that sweeping velvet so—it was Oberdon Audrey!

He crept further in the awful passage, his hand on the spring, a horrid fascination seizing him to feel, for a brief second, the damp terror that would be his enemy's portion so soon.

In—only a step further, into the close, hot-cold gloom; only a step further out of God's sunlight; and then—and then—it must have been the wind after all that stirred the velvet pall, for Oberdon Audrey was not there!

It must have been a hare he heard when he was sure it was Oberdon Audrey's footsteps.

A smothered curse, a horrid imprecation, burst from his lips; he sprang to his feet, half smothered with the close, damp heat; he stumbled, in his blind rage, his mad, disappointed haste; stumbled, prone on his face—

Inside the vault!

And, like a lightning-flash, the door swung to, released from its prisoning spring, and snapped with a shriek of doom!

And no human hand might ever undo it!

Days after, they found a handkerchief, caught in the firm crack of the door; and on the protruding corner was the name, "Vivian Ulmerstone."

It never came to Lenore's ears; when she had hidden him—to his destruction—she had flown home, burning with a fever that mounted higher and higher till it dethroned her reason; and the very hour a horror-stricken-servant had brought to Edna her release—the corner of her husband's pocket-handkerchief—the last gasp of Lenore Carlingford's life went out.

THE END.

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